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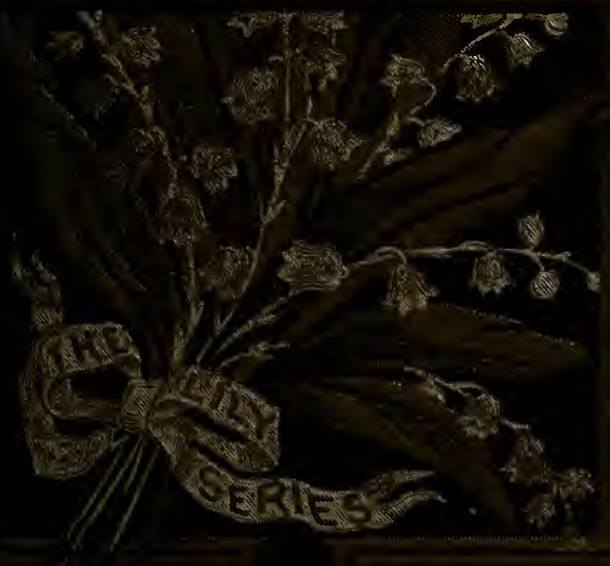
WOMAN OUR ANGEL

SEQUEL TO "LOOKING ROUND"



WOMAN OUR ANGEL;

OR,

LED INTO THE LIGHT.

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WOMAN OUR ANGEL;

OR,

LED INTO THE LIGHT.

BY

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WOMAN OUR ANGEL.

CHAPTER I.

DONALD ROLAND had been on a ride to one of his farms, and was returning through a large tract of woods. He was walking his horse, in order to avoid the impending branches that lined the narrow wagon-track, when he heard, as he thought, the neigh of a horse. Immediately Hunter pricked up his ears and whinnied as though he had recognized an acquaintance. Supposing, of course, there must be another traveller in the woods besides himself, and probably they would soon meet, he kept his eye in the direction of the road; but he could see only a short distance in advance of his progress, as the path was curving, and the undergrowth of wood quite dense. Coming soon, however, to a point where a clear view could be obtained for some distance ahead, he began to be somewhat alarmed, as no person was in sight; and yet the neigh of a horse was again heard by him, and not far off. The reason for his alarm was, that on one side of the path he was travelling there extended for some distance a swamp covered with dense spruce, and part of it dangerous, on account of its very loose substratum—in some places a positive quicksand. As it was well known to all persons living in that vicinity, and far removed from the highway, there had never been apprehension of danger; consequently, it was left unguarded by a fence. As he kept his eye upon the swamp, feeling almost certain that the sound had proceeded from that quarter, just as he came to an opening in the bushes, he was almost horror-stricken by the view which burst upon

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him. A young lady, arrayed in a handsome riding-suit, was clinging to one of the bushes, and near to her a horse, which he recognized at once as his own Tom. Springing from his horse, and throwing the bridal rein over the saddle, he prepared to enter the dangerous locality. The only possible way by which he could get to the scene of the disaster was by carefully treading on the roots of the small trees, and this had to be accomplished at times by a leap from one to the other, for the bushes were more scattered here than in any other portion of the swamp. He had thus proceeded for some rods, when he found himself within a rail's length from the young lady, but without the possibility of making any further approach, for the ground between him and her was too treacherous to venture upon; indeed, when the lady saw him place his foot upon the quivering soil, she called out:

"Oh! don't, don't! do not venture! I have tried it with a stick—there is no substance to it."

Donald saw, as he looked at her, that she appeared quite self-possessed; her beautiful countenance, radiant with health, seemed bright and cheerful, although somewhat excited by the effort she was constantly obliged to make in keeping her position. The small tree upon whose base she stood was barely sturdy enough to give some little aid in keeping an erect position, and the footing afforded by the branching roots was of the smallest possible compass.

"I am glad to see," said Donald, "that you do not appear to be alarmed."

"Oh! I am not alarmed now," she replied with a smile; "but how shall we get out?"

"Can you hold on for a few moments longer?"

"Oh! yes; if I can only keep the pony quiet; but ever since he heard the neigh of your horse he has been restless, and every motion he makes sinks him deeper into the marsh. I got off from him in order to relieve him of my weight."

"If you can throw the reins over his head"—she was holding the pony near to his head, he being close beside her—"I think he will try to clear himself. Wait, however, until I get to the solid earth again, and I will call him."

Donald was soon back to the road, and giving a peculiar whistle, the active creature, after a desperate struggle, bounded forward, but only apparently to sink the deeper. Another whistle and an encouraging call from his master—but the poor beast was unable to move; he stood panting and looking wistfully at young Roland, as though asking for aid. It was evident that alone he would not be able to extricate the horse. That was, however, with him now a

secondary matter. The situation of the young lady absorbed his thoughts, and how to relieve her was a difficult problem. Had there been a rail fence near at hand, he could soon have made a bridge sufficient to bear her weight; or if an axe were to be had, he might cut saplings as a substitute. His only resource was to find, if possible, broken branches that might lie about the woods. This was, however, not easily accomplished; some were too large for him to handle, and some too small to be of much service. But he gathered what he could, and with great difficulty made his way with them to the spot were the young lady stood. The energy he manifested excited her sympathy, and more than once she expressed her deep regret that she had caused him so much trouble.

"The trouble is nothing," he replied, "if I can only make a platform that will bear my weight."

"Oh! but it need not bear so much as that," she replied; "you must not try to come to me; do you think I may venture now?"

"Not yet, by no means; have a little more patience; I will be back soon."

He thought if he could only procure a pole that would reach the tree to which she was clinging, and rest one end of it on that, he could hold the other end, and thus afford her the means of steadying herself as she traversed the bushy pathway. It took some time to accomplish this; and when the pole was extended, and she, loosing her hold upon the tree, grasped it, and ventured upon the frail tangled causeway, Donald trembled with anxiety. A little flutter or haste in her movement, and all his labour would have been in vain; and a fall might have been attended with most serious consequences. A ten-foot pole might easily have been thrust down into the quagmire its whole length. Carefully she stepped, apparently without the least perturbation, until she grasped his outstretched hand, and his strong arm held her firmly upon the narrow foothold where he stood. Not a word was said by either, as he at once pointed out the spots where she could place her foot, himself preceding her, but never loosing his firm grasp of her hand until they both stood on the solid ground.

The effort which the young lady made, both of body and mind, had been a little too much for her physical powers, and Roland noticed that she was trembling, and on looking at her, perceived she was very pale. He immediately seated her on a rock close at hand.

"You must be very much fatigued, Miss Herbert—I believe I must be right in giving you that name?"

She smiled as she replied, "And I believe it is Mr. Roland to whom I am indebted for this deliverance?"

"My name is Roland. I have been wishing for an introduction ever since your brother left; for, although you were at my house on the evening of his departure, both he and myself were so absorbed in some business matters, and the boat coming along sooner than we anticipated, the promise he had made of an introduction to his sisters was doubtless forgotten in the excitement of parting from you. May I presume upon the present scene as all-sufficient for that purpose."

"If you are satisfied, sir, I am sure I ought to be—but how shall we rescue that dear horse? He has acted almost like an intelligent being. You see I thought he was thirsty, and turned him down here that he might drink; but although I think he did want to drink, yet the moment he dipped his feet in the water he shrank back, but I urged him in, and then he began to flounder and plunge forward. He seemed to know, however, that the firmer footing was near the trees; and when he reached the one where you found me, I thought my best plan was to alight and relieve the horse, and by clinging to the tree I might save myself from sinking in the mire until I could devise some way of getting out, or some one might come along who could offer me assistance. But I see now that I have been in more real danger than I thought for. There! there! he is trying to get clear—please do call him as you did before!"

The horse had made a violent effort, and had succeeded in getting so near the track by which Roland had gone back and forth, that the gentleman was enabled to approach near enough to reach him with his hand. For a few moments he endeavoured to calm the excited creature, by patting him and saying encouraging words; he then took the bridle and attempted to lead him. The desperate effort Tom made under these circumstances. had like to have resulted in serious consequences to his master. Roland made, in his haste, a false step; he lost his foothold on the path, and was to all appearances falling under the horse's feet, when luckily he caught hold of a branch, and by a violent effort prevented the catastrophe; the horse plunged forward and gained the solid earth.

Miss Herbert had arisen from her seat, and as she saw the danger in which her deliverer was for the instant placed, she screamed aloud and rushed forward to his rescue.

"Stop! stop!" he quickly said, "I am all right," and in a moment more he was by her side. Overcome by the

excitement she had been under, and perhaps overjoyed to find the whole thing so happily terminated, she burst into tears. Roland said nothing, but gently led her again to a seat, while he busied himself for a while in rubbing down the noble horse with leaves and grass, for every limb was trembling from the great effort he had made. When his horse was somewhat recovered, he led him up to where she was seated.

"Perhaps, Miss Herbert, it may be a relief to you to mount again. Allow me to assist you."

She readily took his offered hand, and was soon on the back of her faithful beast, who now seemed as fresh as ever. Again, as she felt herself once more safely seated on the comfortable saddle, the tears started and streamed silently down her lovely cheeks. Roland witnessed her emotion, but made no attempt to soothe—perhaps from motives of delicacy, as she might not wish to know that he was conscious how deeply she felt. He at once prepared to mount his hunter, and, riding up to her with a pleasant smile on his face, (Donald's smile was like the sun breaking through a cloud; his expression in general was of that sober cast, almost bordering on sternness, that the contrast was not only marked, but peculiarly pleasing)—

"May I consider, then, Miss Herbert, that my introduction has been accomplished legitimately, and that I may offer my services for the remainder of the ride?"

"By all means," she replied, "although I fear you must think me very heartless that I have not yet given you one word of thanks for all your trouble—believe me, I do——"

"Please let that pass—say not a word about it. I feel that I owe thanks to good luck, or whatever it was that brought me to your rescue."

Mary Herbert was somewhat shocked at the idea expressed in the latter part of his remark; not merely because he had used the word luck, but from the qualification he annexed to it. Somehow it had a cold, heartless sound, that affected her sensibly. If he meant by "whatever it was" to refer to Divine Providence, it seemed to her to be greatly wanting in reverence; but the frankness of his manner, combined with such delicate politeness, flashed also at the same time across her mind, and no doubt tended to modify if not to overcome the unpleasant impression. The feeling, however, was not caused by any reasoning or analysis of his remark; it was a mere impression, like a sudden waft of air from an unexpected quarter; it came and passed away at the instant, although doubtless leaving a mark that she could not entirely get rid of,

as we shall see hereafter; but she replied at once, and in a very pleasant manner:

"Well, if you will not let me express my thanks, I suppose I may feel them; and indeed I have great reason to be thankful, not only for my deliverance from peril, but for an escort out of these woods; for, to tell the truth, I have been lost. I took a path into these woods which looked very inviting, as I rode along the highway; and meeting other paths, I diverged into one of them, which led me into this, and this seems to lead nowhere, as I can see, in particular. In fact, I have wandered until I have lost all points of the compass. This has indeed been a very eventful day to me, and one I shall not soon forget; if you had not come along, what should I have done?"

"I suppose we may as well drop the inference implied in that *if*—that is, if the preachers are right; my coming along was as much ordained as your getting into the mire; we were both of us mere tools in the hand of fate."

"Not mere tools, do you think? I came into trouble from not using my common-sense, and venturing carelessly into unknown paths; and you exercised much good sense and judgment, besides extraordinary energy, in delivering me from the dilemma into which my rashness had led me."

"I do not pretend to think either way. Chance, I take it, has a great deal to do with most occurrences in life. Now it was a mere whim that led me to take the path through the woods in preference to the common road."

"But may not that whim, as you call it, have been induced by the Spirit who controls all events? Now I look upon you as an agent of our heavenly Father, directed by an unseen guidance to me in an hour of peril."

"That brings us back to the assertion you objected to—that we are controlled by fate."

"If I knew what you mean by fate, I could say yes or no to your assertion."

"I mean that unchanging power which controls all human destinies and infolds them with its mighty chain, and drives them through its own hidden paths to accomplish its own predetermined ends; *that* seems to me the essence of the doctrine of foreordination."

"But without, do you think, any reference to our own free agency?"

"Remember it is no thought of mine. I merely give you the substance of a doctrine very generally taught: my own sense repels the idea that we can be free agents, and yet our wills overruled and our course directed by a superior power."

"I am not a theologian, as you may guess, and therefore shall not attempt to reconcile what seems to be a contradiction. We may believe, however, that they are reconcilable to Infinite Wisdom, if not to us finite creatures."

"Then we must cast away our reasoning powers, which alone make us responsible as free agents, and go blindfold!"

"Not necessarily, as I take it. Our reason teaches us that there is an Almighty Maker and Ruler, and furthermore that his power and wisdom must be beyond our comprehension. Surely if we can yield assent to the fact that he made all things out of nothing, we may be willing to acknowledge that in his government there may be principles at work we cannot understand."

"Your last proposition, Miss Herbert, is undoubtedly correct. There are principles at work which we cannot understand; but if I should say to you that two parallel lines, run to a certain distance, would certainly come together, you would object to my proposition on the ground that I reverse a mathematical axiom—it is contrary to reason. Must I drop my reasoning powers when I come in contact with divine revelation?—must I not judge of spiritual matters as I do of material—by the rule of reason?"

"So far as reason can guide us, undoubtedly we must; but our reason has boundaries which it cannot pass, as our comprehension has limits that are palpable to us. May we not one day be able to understand clearly that a perfect agreement exists between what now seems antagonistic, just as a person may be able by prolonged study to understand mathematical propositions once to his view not only abstruse but even absurd?"

"Pardon me, Miss Herbert, but I was not speaking of what may possibly come to pass, but of our present condition and circumstances; your conclusions are no doubt correct if we are to ignore the present and launch into the future and the unknown. Our present condition is positive; the only guide we have is at fault; the way is dark, and the more we try to peer through the mist, the more confused we become, and the horror of great darkness broods over the gulf beyond."

"The more need, then, do you not think, of a *Father's* guiding hand—a *Father's* watchful care and ceaseless love?"

Roland did not reply; a sigh escaped him, and his companion, thinking that the subject was not agreeable, did not wish to continue it. For a short distance they rode side by side in silence. At length Roland asked:

"How do you like your horse, Miss Herbert?"

"Oh! he is a lovely creature—I only wonder how you could agree to part with him."

"I should not have done so under common circumstances, and had I not believed he was going into the possession of those who could appreciate him."

"I do appreciate him, I assure you, and the kindness of his master too; for I cannot but think that it was more from a principle of generosity than any other feeling that I have been permitted to call him mine, and have enjoyed already so many pleasant rides. And I am very happy in having an opportunity for presenting my thanks, which I do most heartily, for the loan of these beautiful equipments. I never enjoyed so easy a saddle before."

"I accept your thanks—it more than compensates—but must make a slight protest against the use you have made of the term generosity. You know the preachers tell us there is nothing good in man, and that supreme selfishness tinctures all our acts."

"Oh! please do not refer to the preachers again. I have but just recovered breath from one tilt on their behalf; have pity and spare me from another."

"I do not wish to argue the point," replied Roland; "I am only anxious to know whether you receive the doctrine as laid down."

"No, I do not, as some define it; I do not believe we are any of us as bad as we might be, and that many beautiful traits are still manifest in the heart of man, just as there are lovely flowers blooming sometimes in barren wastes. There are oases in the moral as well as the natural world."

Roland, smiling, replied: "And there are treacherous quicksands, too, into which the unwary traveller is tempted by the limpid water that lies above them."

"But even these may be only mementoes of our obligations to our heavenly Father and our earthly benefactors."

Miss Herbert did not smile as she fixed her eye on Roland, but her voice trembled, and there was a hesitancy in bringing out the last word, as though somewhat at a loss for the right one. "But where have we got now?" This she said in a more lively manner, and the remark was caused by an apparent ending of the road, which indeed was merely a cart-track amid the dense woods. It had been used in carrying off quite a large tract of wood which had been cut some years before, and was now lost amid a thick growth of small trees, which had taken the place of the once towering oaks.

"We are as far as a lady can very well go on horseback; but if you are not too much fatigued, I would invite you to alight,

and I will accompany you to a spot of a somewhat interesting character; and, in fact, I have come purposely on this path, that I may introduce you to it. If I judge rightly, you have a fondness for wild and lonely scenery." The peculiar smile which played over his features lighted them with a brilliancy that Miss Herbert had not before noticed, and she could not help inwardly exclaiming, "Can the heart be bad that speaks through such a face?"

She did not immediately respond to his suggestion, for a rush of thought as well as feeling for the moment oppressed her.

"But, perhaps," continued Roland, "you may not feel like walking just now? We will take some other opportunity."

"Oh! by no means. I feel perfectly refreshed and ready for anything but another quagmire."

"I would not willingly lead you into one, either material or mental. I know the misery of the latter too well to wish another in the same dilemma; and I hope you will pardon the uncalled-for suggestions on my part, that I fear may have given you pain. I sometimes speak without due reflection."

"We all do that, I believe—at least, I know I do." She was going to say that they had not troubled her in the least; but as she could not do it with perfect truthfulness, she refrained. Assisting her to alight, and securing the horses, he led her a few paces and then entered a path only wide enough for a single passenger; it was, however, but a few rods in length, when it emerged into a beautiful grove of cedars, with occasionally a large oak spreading its arms far over the soft turf; the cedars were in clumps, with intervening spaces through which they could make their way two abreast. Offering his arm, Roland proceeded to thread their way through the openings; and Miss Herbert, perceiving the traces of a foot-path, as though made by a single traveller, remarked:

"This seems to be a highway for some one, although the entrance to it is rather obscure."

"I do not know that any one besides myself ever treads it. But here we are."

Just then they had passed around a clump of cedars and were standing on a flat rock covering a space of perhaps twenty-five feet by fifty. The surface of the rock was perfectly smooth and nearly level as a floor, the edges lined with natural turf, which seemed almost to be growing upon it. On one side an English larch, with its branches quite low, together with a thick cluster of cedars, inclosed it from

observation; while on the other some chestnut-trees of large size spread their arms over it, affording a complete shelter from the sun, and giving a sombre complexion to the whole inclosure. Immediately before them, sparkling through the tops of bushes, rolled the beautiful Hudson, only in part, however, visible from where they stood, with mountains, whose bases formed the western shore, full in view.

"This is lovely!" exclaimed Miss Herbert. "But it is more than that—it fills one with solemnity; it seems like a Bethel."

"It might be, to one who could see the ladder and the heavenly messengers upon it." A suppressed sigh escaped the lips of Roland with the words he had just uttered. His companion noticed it, and a deep sympathy was at once excited. She even thought she discovered a tremour in the tones of his voice. She made no reply, and he continued:

"I admire it for its solitude and seclusion. You know sometimes one wishes to get away from the world, to be alone with one's own thoughts, where the surroundings have nothing to remind us of the dull routine of life."

"And nothing but the works of God about us," said Miss Herbert, almost interrupting his remark, as though she wished to connect the thought with what he was saying. He did not reply at once, as if at a loss for the proper answer.

"True," he said, "that is very true. Some mighty hand above the power of man planted this rock and reared those mountains. *Almighty* he must be—but—" He paused, and, as though wishing to change the discourse, said:

"Shall we take a look from the other end? Are you accustomed to looking over precipices?"

"Not much."

"There is not much danger in this case, except to a foolhardy adventurer."

As they reached the western extremity of the rock the river opened to view in all its beauty. It lay like a beautiful lake beneath them, inclosed on every side with towering hills—some, bare, broken rocks, and others wooded even to their summits. Miss Herbert was perfectly silent. She seemed filled with admiration at the varied grandeur of the scene. At length she said:

"Is the river so far below us, or is that but a small sail-boat I see on the other side?"

"Please let me lead you to a place where you can have a more appreciating view of the distance to the water below."

Just on one corner of the precipice a stout cedar, whose roots seemed to be bedded beneath the solid rock, threw one of its branches out parallel with the point of the cliff. It had been trimmed off, and afforded a clean and stout brace on which one might lean with apparent security.

"Now, Miss Herbert, you may lean over this with perfect safety, but to be doubly sure, allow me to hold your hand."

She readily extended her hand, and resting against the branch, looked over, but almost immediately drew back.

"It is fearful!" she exclaimed. "This rock must overhang the river."

"I presume not," Roland replied; "but the face is perpendicular, and extends in the same way to quite a depth beneath the surface of the river."

"There is no shore then?"

"Nothing but the face of this rock against which the waters wash.

"May I look again? I was somewhat startled at the first view, the water looked so fearfully dark."

And again, though for a much longer time, she looked over and gazed at the water as it rushed past.

"A fall from here would be certain death?"

"Most likely. But is there not a fascination in looking down and watching the running water?"

"There is indeed! The more I look, the more I want to."

"I have often imagined, while leaning over that branch as you have been, how a person disgusted with the vicissitudes of life, and tired of endeavouring to solve the problem of human existence, might in some unhappy mood seek relief from his troubled thoughts by a plunge below."

"He would soon have all doubts solved," replied Miss Herbert, "but it would be knowledge gained at too costly a price."

"True—that is no doubt true. We do not, however, always count the cost of our actions. But now let me show you a spot where, if you should ever in your rides feel like visiting this place, you may, if you choose, take a rest." So, leading her to the opposite side from that where they had been standing, she immediately discovered a singular contrivance for a seat. It was formed of the branches of two cedar-trees intertwined, and supported by bringing down branches from above. "Please try it."

"This is luxury indeed—fragrance, and perfect ease, and beauty all combined. If the view downward from that corner should tempt some unhappy mortal to a deed of evil, this seat would surely tend to foster a very different view of things.

From *this* one must be induced to look *upward;* for there is everything to attract the gaze that way—the soft blue sky, in trembling patches through those trees; the distant mountain-tops, just far enough to put on their hazy covering; the gentle murmur that comes up from the unseen river—not altogether unseen either, for there is an opening through those trees that line this crest that gives a sight of it, sparkling about the base of yonder mountain. It seems like a picture, it is so separated from all its surroundings, hung up to adorn this temple. Surely one might swing to sleep here and have pleasant dreams."

"It shall be sacred to your use, then, after this, Miss Herbert, whenever you may feel like a visit here."

"Oh! thank you, thank you! I think I should like to come very often; but I fear I should get lost in finding it."

"I can show you a more direct path than that by which you came; but I advise you to refrain, if you should be here alone, from indulging the downward view; a false step, a little dizziness, might be fatal."

"Thank you; I will abide by your advice."

"And now, if you will remain here a few moments, I will bring our horses; we will gain the highway by another path."

He immediately withdrew, and was in a moment lost to sight. Miss Herbert resumed her seat—her thoughts in a strange tumult; the whole scene of the hour past rushing through her mind: her deliverance from danger, the bearing of her deliverer—his gentlemanly behaviour, his expressive countenance, his fascinating smile, his piercing eye, his train of thought, all mingled confusedly, but each making its impression upon her mind. It was a strong impression; but whether in his favour or against him she would have been unable to decide, except as to one particular—unbounded confidence in his genuineness. He was no hypocrite; nothing false could attach to him—a true gentleman; she would trust herself with him under any circumstances.

As soon as the horses appeared, Miss Herbert left her seat, and was ready to be assisted to her saddle. The few moments that Roland had been absent had wrought a strange spell on the heart of Mary Herbert. She could not tell why; for surely she did not love him. No, not yet; perhaps she never will; but his presence now brings something with it. Call it a charm, an influence, an unseen power—whatever it was, her heart felt it, the colour on her lovely cheek, the tremour in her hand, as he took it to assist her in mounting, all bore witness to it. She knew not why she should thus feel. She may find out one of these days; at present she has only the conscious-

ness of its effect; she has not even had time to ask herself why it was or what it was.

A very pleasant path was that by which Roland piloted the young lady. First through clumps of cedars, following a well-defined path, then through a gentle ravine and along the border of a sparkling brook, with overhanging chestnut and oak—the turf smooth as velvet and cropped close by sheep, who were then reclining in scattered groups beneath the larger trees. From this beautiful spot, which Miss Herbert named "The Vale of Content," they emerged upon a retired country road, lined with stone fences, winding around through gentle eminences, many of which were spotted with cedars.

"How tempting that old bucket looks, hanging over the well, and dripping, I suppose, from a recent dip into the spring."

"Would you like a drink?" said Roland, in reply.

"Oh! it is of no consequence; please do not trouble yourself; we shall no doubt soon be home."

"That is no good reason why you should not be refreshed at once. The beverage is of the purest quality, I can assure you; and, moreover, the lady of the house will hardly forgive me for passing without giving her an opportunity to say a word to me. She is the truest friend I have in the world. Take a note of her, and I will give you her character at another time."

Roland, as he said this, reined up to the little gate, that opened into a neat inclosure, where not a stray chip or even weed could be seen. The grass must have been swept with a broom, as well as the flagging that led from the gate to the door, which was on one side of the house, and from the door to the well. The house was small, of one story, without paint, and old, for moss had gathered plentifully on the roof; but it had a very neat and comfortable aspect. Fine shades surrounded it, and altogether it denoted respectability, without any pretension beyond that of an humble cottage.

Scarcely had Roland dismounted when an elderly woman appeared in the doorway—her dress plain, her countenance prepossessing, her eye dark and brilliant, and yet the expression mild; the cap on her head, the kerchief about her neck and covering her breast, the trim of the gown, long and of a full pattern—all so appropriately arranged, had an air of gentility not often witnessed among those of humble life.

"Good morning, Aunty," said Roland; "all I want this morning is a tumbler, the big flowered tumbler, Aunty." The last sentence he pronounced in a louder voice, for she had already gone in to comply with his request.

"You fancy the water is sweeter out of this," handing it to him as he came up to the door.

"Well, you know, I fancy it on account of old times. Thank you. But I want one thing more. I wish to introduce you to a young lady who has but just come into our place, and one I think you will like, and I think she will like you."

"With great pleasure would I make her acquaintance." And at once she accompanied Roland to the gate, outside of which Miss Herbert remained, still seated on her horse.

"Miss Herbert," said Roland, "I take the liberty of introducing to you Mrs. Haywood; you will probably hear her name mentioned very often, especially among our young people, who think Aunt Haywood about the wisest and best woman we have in these parts."

"Now, Donald, is that fair," said the lady, "after bringing me out to make the acquaintance of this stranger young lady? And would it not be better, and more mannerly, in fewer words just to say who this lady is that you wish me to know? for sure am I she must be a special favourite." Then turning toward the lady, "I assure you, Miss, I do not think this young gentleman has ever done such a thing in his life before as introduce a lady, especially a young lady, to any one."

"Why, Aunty, to tell you the truth, I thought I might with perfect propriety introduce *you*, being an old friend. But my acquaintance with this lady does not warrant my going beyond the mention of her name—only from the short acquaintance I have, I judge she would like the privilege, when she rides along here, of stepping in occasionally and having a little chat with you."

"You are from the city, I judge, Miss?"

"No, indeed, madam; I merely spent a day there on my way here. You have a charming country here, ma'am"

"Very fair, Miss, though pretty wild in some spots, but pleasant to those who love mountains and woods, and nature generally as God has made it, pleasanter to me than all the handiwork of man; but, Donald, please help this lady alight, and come in and rest awhile."

The young lady looked at Roland, as though awaiting his will in the matter.

"I think, Aunty, as Miss Herbert has dismounted several times already this morning, she may be somewhat fatigued. What do you think of her having unwittingly ventured into the Spruce Swamp?"

"Surely not! or how could she be here?"

"Indeed she did, and but for the chance of my coming along, I fear would have been there still."

"It was indeed a happy chance, then, that led you that way, both for the sake of this dear child, and for your own sake too, Donald, for I am thinking your mind would have had an additional burden upon it had any harm come to her through your fault."

"Oh! but my dear madam," exclaimed the young lady, with much earnestness, "there was no fault on his part; he made superhuman exertions to rescue me, and at serious risk to himself."

"I have not the least doubt of that, Miss; and that he would willingly have risked not only danger, but even his life, rather than not have rescued yourself or any other lady from peril; but he should never have allowed such a dangerous spot to be unguarded."

"You are right, Aunty; and I assure you my conscience has upbraided me bitterly all this morning, and I shall not rest until a strong fence is thrown around it. And now, Miss Herbert, you perceive that what you were pleased to consider gallantry on my part, and for which you wished to thank me, turns out to be a purely selfish act—an additional testimony in favour of total depravity."

"Don't you reply to him, Miss. He knows well enough that he is not so bad as he might be, and that he has many noble, generous feelings, which God has endowed him with, and for which he ought to be thankful."

"Well, Aunty, you have not invited this young lady yet to call upon you, as she rides by."

"I trust she will never do that without stopping to rest a bit. And besides, my dear Miss, he knows perfectly well that no child ever felt more free to come himself or introduce a friend to a parent's home, than he does here—indeed, he is all I have left to love in this world."

There was such a tender, earnest tone to the voice of the old lady, and her bright eye was so softened by the mist spread over it, that Mary Herbert was much affected. She did not wish to manifest a feeling of interest, and yet in spite of anything that had dropped from him in their previous conversation that had excited prejudice, she could not but feel that he had a noble nature—that he was one a woman might love with an intense affection.

After bidding adieu to the old lady, they were soon riding up the avenue to the Bradford House, where Roland, having escorted his fair charge, returned to his own home, to ponder the events of the day, and perhaps to find feelings at work in his breast to which he had hitherto been a stranger.

CHAPTER II.

MARY HERBERT was, perhaps, from her peculiar training, better calculated to attract a mind like that of Donald Roland than any unmarried lady he had as yet known. She was on many accounts a child of nature; that is, her manners and habits of thought had not been induced by any formal training in a fashionable school or even by mingling with fashionable society; indeed, her mother and her mother's family were accustomed to a very plain style. Her education, and that of her sister, had been directed by their father, and that, too, under many disadvantages. But feeling intensely how his own life had been thrown away, he resolved to do all in his power to redeem it from a perfect failure by laying a foundation in the moral and mental training of his children, upon which usefulness and respectability might be established. Being himself a man of refined tastes and gentle manners, he had done what he could, by conversation and instruction from general principles, to train them in cultivating the more feminine graces. Their minds he was enabled to educate by having on hand a well-selected library. This portion of his property he had happily retained—happily for himself and for them. While they were in childhood, almost his only companions had been the choice spirits whose works he had, in days of plenty, collected on his shelves. With them he could lose himself, and forget, for a time, the petty annoyances to which his domestic life was subject. And now, when his children had become of an age to appreciate them, by a judicious selection of subjects adapted to their comprehension he led them on from step to step, conversing with them, as he had opportunity, on what they were reading, and carefully mingling the *dulce* and the *utile*—the cultivation of taste as well as the gaining of useful knowledge. And in this

way, in spite of untoward influences, he had the happiness to know, before he was taken away, that their minds were, so far as he could judge, better informed than those of their companions who had enjoyed advantages in what are called select schools. But beyond this, he had reason to believe they had formed a taste for reading and a capacity for gathering information which would go with them through life. His means, we have seen, were very limited; by self-denial he had been able to add some few useful works of more recent date to his stock of classic literature, and one that he prized as of inestimable value to young ladies as well as for those of advanced life—the works of Miss Hannah More. They were, indeed, written for a state of society which has, in a great measure, passed away; but they introduce one to a style of writing and living of an elevated character. And as her life was passed, especially in its earlier stage, among some of the brightest minds that have adorned the pages of English history, and with whom she was on terms of most intimate friendship, her life and letters afford a complete illustration of a high standard of thought, as well as a delineation of pure characters in an elevated state of society, most refreshing to the mind when wearied with the commonplace, utilitarian routine of the present day.

The unwearied pains which Mr. Herbert took thus to fit his daughters for usefulness and happiness had, of course, a tendency to give him an influence over their minds and a hold on their affections that endeared his memory in the most tender and sacred manner. Every wish he had expressed, every item of advice he had given, was treasured with most assiduous care, and religiously observed. Their peculiar trials during the period that their mother lived as the survivor of their parents, have already been in some measure unfolded; they need not be repeated here. Mother is a very sacred name; too sacred to be tarnished by unnecessary exposure of one unworthy of the title. They are now orphans, and, as we have seen, cling to William, their half-brother, as their guide and protector. His ardent affection to their common father; his fraternal care and generous love for them, together with his manly character, have combined to give him an influence over them almost as great as the parent they have lost. It was the dying request of their father, that if at any time they should be placed in circumstances that required the counsel of a wise and tried friend, they should apply to him who had been the counsellor and guide of their brother, the Rev. Dr. Ransom. During the period in which they were left under the entire control of their mother, it was impossible for them to seek this advice,

or to have taken advantage of his protection in any way; and even William could do nothing beyond encouraging them to await with patience the period when they would be of an age to select for themselves such protection as they required. Soon after the death of their father, he, too, was thrown upon the world by the death of Mr. Stanley, and had to seek his fortune in a foreign land. Some years elapsed before his return, when he found them under the care of an aged grandparent, living under circumstances very unfavourable for the cultivation of mind or manners, and very disagreeable on account of the prejudice entertained by some members of the family against their father, whose memory was so precious to them. William being now of age, and having accumulated some little property, immediately took measures to be appointed their guardian; and, with the assistance of his good friend, Mr. Tremain, succeeded in wresting their property from the hands of those who, in their anxiety to hoard it, were denying them even the comforts of life. He then removed them to Woodburn, that they might, during his absence abroad, have the benefit of the watchful care and judicious advice of Dr. Ransom. The Doctor and his lovely wife would gladly have taken them under their own roof but for want of room. By his recommendation, however, they obtained an eligible situation near the Parsonage, at the old Bradford place, then in the possession of the youngest of that family, who, with a widowed sister and her children, was living there.

Mary Herbert was now in her eighteenth year—her personal appearance attractive. We have already represented her as tall for her age, of graceful form, her hair quite dark, and a luxuriance of it, and in general arranged with an evident design rather to keep it out of the way than to make the most of it as an ornament: as she usually wore it, the long natural curls formed a rich background to her finely-moulded neck and face.

But one almost forgot about the beauty of her countenance in its natural and sweet expression; there was an animation, delicacy, feeling, one might almost say intense feeling; her dark eye, beneath its long lashes, seemed to be floating in liquid light, its brightness softened as if tear-drops had spread over them. It was very evident, too, that she was perfectly unconscious of possessing any charms beyond the plainest of her sex; in fact, the peculiar training she had received had a tendency to draw her attention away from her personal appearance. She had enjoyed no advantages from cultivated society, and was by no means an expert as to the

conventionalities of polite life; all her present ease of manner and graceful deportment was the result of natural good sense, kindliness, and purity of heart—and the evidence of this was the charm which had fascinated young Roland. He perceived there was delicacy without prudery, grace without affectation, a cultivated mind with apparent unconsciousness of any attainments beyond her age. This fresh, lovely being, thus thrown strangely in his path, had a powerful effect on the mind of Donald Roland, already softened, as the reader may have anticipated, by his recent acquaintance with Mrs. Sandford. That lady might not have been the most beautiful lady Roland had ever seen; but there was such a combination of fascinating qualities that it may in truth be said she was the first who had awakened him to a sense of female loveliness: the fine oval face, the soft speaking eye, the ruby lips, with the witching smile trembling at the corners, the delicately-arched brows, the fair forehead, with its crown of glossy hair; the form faultless, and every movement graceful. He must have been callous indeed if, when thrown into a friendly intimacy, he had been unaffected by her personal charms. But Mrs. Sandford had more than beauty; there was a kindliness of feeling, a whole-heartedness in appreciating the interest of the moment, a manifestation of sympathy quick to kindle into laughter or tears, as the occasion called for them, an apparent abandonment of self for the feelings of those around her—all combined with good common-sense and freedom from affectation, that no doubt threw all sense of mere personal beauty into the background. Her presence was an enchantment; and one could not well have said it was this quality or that, only you were conscious of a powerful charm.

Hitherto Donald had rather shunned than courted the society of ladies—those with whom he had casually associated were not to his taste; he had, therefore, rather avoided the society of the softer sex. But Mrs. Sandford came across his path like a brilliant star taking its place in the firmament. At first his notice was attracted by her appearance. She was a novelty to him; and, as pleasing qualities unfolded at each interview, he began to feel a satisfaction in her society he could not well define. Nor did he attempt to define it; a want of his nature, however, seemed to be supplied; he felt a freedom he had not hitherto enjoyed in the society of ladies; his conversation, too, he found need not be restricted within the narrow bounds of commonplace or merely local topics; his own peculiar feelings, which hitherto had been closely cloistered, he could unfold to her, because he felt a consciousness that she could appreciate them.

Nor was the lady herself unaffected by this new intimacy. There was a manly bearing about Donald that would have been attractive to ladies in general—a reserve of manner connected with an apparent desire to please—an appreciative mind—a ready wit, that manifested itself in an unobtrusive way—and politeness that seemed to be inbred. But what interested Mrs. Sandford more particularly in this new acquaintance was, not so much what was seen as in that which was hidden from common view—some inner feeling that evidently exerted a powerful influence over the whole character. At times it would obtrude itself in a sentence, or even a word, and then again in a mere look—perhaps an involuntary sigh, or a shade of sadness passing over the countenance like a dark cloud across the sun. She knew there must be something there, something of consequence; and with all a woman's desire to soothe and heal, she cherished the wish to enter that inner recess and find out the cause of the shadow and the sigh.

Now the reader need not be startled by this exposition of interest and sympathy on the part of this lady. It was the interest and sympathy of a pure and refined heart, unalloyed by even a taint of unhallowed feeling. Nor was the admiration of Donald Roland for her soiled with a thought of evil. Beauty and feminine grace and loveliness are gifts of God—and so are the rose and the lily. We may call them ours, and nourish them in our garden or window, and no stranger may feel at liberty nor have even a wish to pluck them from their stock. But when their rich tints and sweet perfume regale his senses and awaken in his heart admiration and gratitude toward their wonderful Creator, does it make their owner less the inheritor of his treasures, or their beauty and fragrance less precious to him?

The effect, however, of this acquaintance with Mrs. Sandford was all-powerful in lifting him out of the isolated condition in which he had hitherto lived; and, on many accounts, it was for him a merciful visitation. The rich feelings with which by nature he had been endowed, were in danger of being crusted over and sealed up, for want of the attractive power of kindred feelings. A wealth of feeling is a blessing; but, like all our good things, evils are so attendant upon them, that even the choicest gifts of God may be perverted to our discomfort. Donald Roland, shut up within himself, his impassioned nature chained down for want of some potent charm to arouse its sensibilities, might have gone through life a cold recluse, unmoved; and if indeed a stranger to its richer joys, at least inexperienced in those trials to which a susceptible

heart is ever exposed. Whether, therefore, for good or for evil, the die with him is cast. He has come into a new world. New feelings are playing in his breast, and, on some accounts, everything about him has assumed a new aspect. What those feelings are, and how he may be affected by them, must be developed in time.

The reader will doubtless perceive that we have gone back a little in our story from where we left off in the previous volume. It was necessary, in order to introduce a scene which, from its peculiar circumstances, had brought Donald Roland and Mary Herbert into an intimacy that it might otherwise have taken many months to accomplish, and it was impossible for either of them, when they separated on that eventful day, not to have felt a peculiar interest in each other. We need not call it love unless we choose; but certain it is, that Mary Herbert looked longer from the window at the gallant rider on his noble steed, who had waited on her to her home, than she had ever looked after any man before, unless it had been her own dear brother Willie; and she looked, too, with new and strange interest. She noticed how well he rode, with what perfect ease he managed his horse, how he seemed to be a part of the noble creature that bore him, and that no movement of that creature could disturb the firm seat of his rider. And she had opportunity for a long view; for Roland, wishing to take a shorter route to his home than by the travelled road, had leaped the stone fence which bounded the highway, and was going at a fine canter across an open field—his own property—directly toward a beautiful grove, that separated the view of his mansion from that of the Bradford house; and when he was lost to view, she still stood and thought.

"Dear sister, what are you looking at?" Julia had come in haste from the back part of the house, having seen the servant leading Tom to the stable.

"Nothing, dear," Mary answered, turning round, and removing her hat as she took a seat, and began arranging one of the feathers that she now perceived for the first time had become somewhat injured.

"You must have had a long ride; you look tired and pale."

"Do I? Well, I am a little tired. I have been further than I designed."

"Dear sister, something has happened to you! What is the matter? Do tell me." And putting her arm about her neck, the sweet girl gave her a kiss, repeating, "Do tell me, dear Mary, what it is!"

Just then a tear started and rolled down the elder sister's

pale, soft cheek. Wiping it away, Julia laid her face on Mary's neck, and began to weep too.

"You are thinking of Willie—I know you are, dear."

The mention of that name, so dear to them both, was just then calculated to excite the wrought-up feelings of the elder sister, and she was compelled to let them have their way; and thus, for a few moments, they sat clasped together, apparently weeping for the same cause. At length, Julia, whose tears came and went more easily than her sister's, raising her face, and tenderly wiping the traces of the outburst from Mary's cheek, said:

"Now come, dear, let us go to our room and have a rest. I know you are very tired."

Glad to have the whole matter solved in this way, and really unable herself to have said what it was that had caused her peculiar feeling, she willingly followed Julia to their private room. And yet Mary was not quite satisfied to let her sister go away with a false impression; for, although the mention of their brother's name had increased the burden on her heart, it was not true that the tear which had first started was caused by thoughts of him, dear as he was to her. She had not been thinking of him, nor could she say with truth that she was thinking of any one in particular. But, trained as they had been to make confidants of each other, so that almost their thoughts were common property, she felt that the whole story of her adventures that morning was due to her sister. Why she had not told her at once she could not define, only that a strange reluctance at giving the particulars had come over her. She had done nothing wrong that she was conscious of. She was not ashamed of her companion, nor afraid to have all she had done or said known either to her sister or to the public; there was nothing that need be kept secret, and yet she felt a strong temptation to secrecy. This, however, must not be. It was almost a dying injunction of their father, that there should be the most perfect faith in each other, and that each should know and be kept acquainted with every purpose and act of the other. This, no doubt, had been enjoined for the special benefit of Julia, as being the younger; but still it was equally enjoined upon both, and Mary determined it should not be first violated by her.

So, when her feelings had become somewhat composed, and while Julia was combing back the ringlets that needed a little fixing after her ride, she began:

"You asked me, sister, when you came into the room, what ailed me? and if I were not tired? I replied that I was some-

what tired; but I think it could not have been altogether that, for I have often gone through much more fatigue and not minded it. I cannot explain to you the reason for it, but a strange sinking of my heart came over me, and a choking sensation. I felt as if I wanted to cry, and yet for no cause."

"You were tired, dear, that is all. How far had you ridden?"

"I cannot tell you, for I do not know. I turned off from the highway, about two miles from here, into a path that led through the woods. It was delightful among those tall trees; and you know I am so fond of the woods that I went on, Tom going on a gentle pace, until I came to a spot where two paths seemed to unite. I suppose I took the wrong one, for the further I went the less travelled it seemed to be. Again, another road diverged from this one, and, as I thought, in a direction towards home; and this, too, seemed interminable. At length, on one side of the road, there seemed an opening, and a little pond of water lay there; so, thinking Tom might be thirsty, I turned toward it; but the moment he stepped into the water he appeared reluctant to remain, and tried to back out. So I urged him a little, and he plunged in, and then kept plunging forward, sinking every time so far into the soft soil that it required his utmost strength apparently to free himself; but the poor fellow at last planted his feet near to one of the larger bushes, and I suppose the roots gave him a slight support, for he halted; and I, thinking it would relieve the poor fellow, sprang from the saddle on to some moss that surrounded the clump of bushes, and stayed myself by clinging to the bush, with one arm around it, and the other holding Tom by the bridle."

"O dear sister! how did you get out?"

"By a wonderful deliverance. I saw there was no possible way by which I could, without some assistance, ever reach the solid ground, for I perceived I was in a swamp or quagmire, and I had landed on a spot from which I could not make the least headway toward the road; for the only possible chance of getting through such a morass would be by stepping from bush to bush—the roots affording some support to the foot; but from where I landed to the next bush was all of a rod's distance, and the little trial I made convinced me that the superstratum had no consistency—so there I was."

"O dear sister! how did you feel? I should have screamed for help. I do believe I should have fainted dead away. Do tell me how you got out."

"It would not have done to have fainted. The only hope

in such a situation is in keeping one's senses in full exercise, and to be perfectly calm."

"O dear! perfectly calm! but it must be you to do that—I should have gone wild with terror; but do tell quick how you managed."

"Well, I stood still and held fast to the bush with one hand, and to Tom's head with the other. Poor fellow! he seemed in agony almost, and panted as though he had been violently exercised. It was perfectly still, except occasionally a bird would fly twittering across or a bluejay scream. I listened intently for the sign of a human being. I thought if I could have heard the sound of an axe I might, by calling aloud, perhaps attract notice. At last, Tom pricked up his ears. I knew he heard something, and I listened to find out, if possible, what had arrested his attention, when, all at once, he whinnied; and to my joy, I could distinctly hear the neigh of a horse, and apparently not far off; and evidently I heard, too, the tread of a horse coming at a regular, moderate pace. My agitation now was intense. The hope of deliverance overcame me more than my fears had done."

"But, dear Mary, how did you know whom it might be, and you all alone?"

"I had no fear on that account; but in a few moments more Tom whinnied again, and almost immediately a gentleman on a splendid horse came in sight, and stopped and looked toward me. I could see he was surprised, and I thought alarmed. He sprang quickly from his saddle, threw the reins on the horse's neck, and came immediately toward me. He seemed to know where to step, and got along quite fast, until he came to the open place immediately before me. When he reached that spot he put on quite a cheerful countenance, saying, with a smile, 'Don't be alarmed, miss.' I told him I was not alarmed then; but said I: 'How shall I get away from here?' 'Can you hold on a little longer?' said he. 'Oh! yes,' I replied; 'but can you not call this horse? He is so restless since seeing you that I fear he will get too deep in the mire to be extricated.' With that the gentleman went back the way he came, and when he got to land he whistled in a peculiar manner, and Tom gave a spring, freed himself, and plunged forward once or twice, and then had to stop."

"But how did he get you out?"

"He gathered sticks and branches of trees, and made a causeway for me, so that I could reach nearly to where he was, when, with a firm grasp, he drew me close to him, and he held on to me until safely landed on *terra firma*."

"Who was he—a gentleman?"

"The most of a gentleman that I have ever seen. It was Mr. Roland, Tom's former owner."

"Why, Mary!"

And then Mary gave a full and free account of the scene at the bower, of the topics of conversation, of their call at Mrs. Haywood's, and even to the parting salutation at their own door; and closing, said:

"He is a gentleman, I should say, of the purest stamp; but oh! I fear, dear Julia, he has some strange, dark views."

"He is very handsome, is he not?" said Julia.

"Indeed, I suppose he would be called handsome; but I never thought about his appearance. I was so taken up with his gentle attention and some peculiarities in his turn of mind; but I should say he was not one easily forgotten—at least I do not think I shall soon forget the scenes of this day, nor his very kind, I might almost say brotherly, attentions."

The sisters, now having prepared themselves, left their room at the call of the dinner-bell. Mary felt somewhat relieved from having made a full recital of the events of the morning. But Mary had not told all; she did not yet know all. There was a strange commotion within she could not define, and therefore could not communicate; and these little flashes of feeling that come with the thoughts of the scene she had passed through, are tokens of a sensation entirely new, and of which she herself is not yet conscious. Love is an affection often made light of, and, by not a few, held up to ridicule. It has been so abused, too, by false pretenders to the holy passion, that in our utilitarian age it is almost scouted from our vocabulary, as a word whose meaning has been lost, if it ever had any beyond the wild fancy of poetic imagination. It has been prostituted to base and sordid purposes, and even at God's holy altar have fair and lovely beings done violence to their better nature, and committed perjury in its sacred name. But the holy principle implanted in the heart by Him whose name the tender passion bears, is still a power with the pure in mind—a power superior to the ills of life; whose holy influence, like a healing balm, mollifies pain, soothes the spirit amid the trials and cares of life, sheds light upon our darkest day, and to all the pleasant things this world has yet for man, imparts a richer charm. Remove this power from its place, cast the sneer of scorn at its high pretensions, smoulder its pure flame beneath the ashes of lust and convenience, and then adieu to the last relic of human bliss the Fall has left.

Mary Herbert had been trained in no conventional school. She was a child of nature, but nature purified by grace. Her teachings had been from the Word of God; and her mind, filled with these holy precepts, moved in freedom; for the true liberty of the soul rests upon obedience and trust. Her feelings were fresh and in all their virgin purity. Her mind had been diverted from the trifles common to her sex to subjects that tended to enlarge and purify. Her companions had been those of higher range of thought than she could have found among her fellows; and although not well versed in the conventionalities of the refined life of her day, her taste was delicate, her judgment, if not matured, was correct, and her sense of propriety keen, without being fastidious. She had great confidence in the honour of manhood, when presented in the garb of the gentleman; and here, perhaps, her teaching may have been at fault. Without guile herself, she was unsuspicious, and perhaps in danger of confiding too easily in false credentials. We shall follow her with deep interest, as she is now thrown almost alone upon her own common-sense, but not without some apprehension.

And now it may be in place to say something about the state of things which this interview has produced upon the mind of young Roland. When riding through the woods that day, he had been thinking more particularly of a scene he had enjoyed at the Sandfords' the past evening. He had become quite intimate there. Things had been arranged in the house and well arranged too—order and neatness the prevailing characteristics—and the sunny aspect of Mrs. Sandford illumined it with unvaried brightness. No matter how cloudy and dark without, there were no clouds nor darkness within.

No particular attention was paid to Donald beyond that of any other guest; but there was such a hearty welcome, such unobtrusive home politeness, such good cheer, such subdued and kindly tones, even to the voices of the host and hostess, that to him it seemed like some quiet haven shut in by beautiful land-slopes from the uncertain ocean, where the waters played in gentle ripples beneath a calm, clear sky. Roland had never before witnessed the beautiful vision of a Christian home. He had, indeed, been at houses where the owners went regularly to church on the Sabbath, and were always in their places at the communion-table; but in their own dwellings he could never distinguish their conduct from those who, like himself, made no pretensions to religious character. At the Sandfords' he could plainly perceive that, without any effort to proclaim their principles, there was a

purifying, elevating power at work, throwing a hallowed charm over their circle. What had made a deep impression on his mind was, more particularly, the closing scene of the evening. He had been engaged in conversation with Mrs. Sandford, and upon one especial point of difficulty and doubt which had long troubled him, and, as usual, he took his stand on the ground of human reason, and kept presenting arguments which the lady made no attempt to answer. She was little more than a listener, for the reason that she was anxious to learn the true state of his mind. The few remarks that she made were mere expressions of sympathy and acknowledgments of her belief that most thinking persons were at times troubled in the same way, and that he must not be discouraged, for it would all be made clear to him yet, she had no doubt.

It was not just the way he liked to be treated; for she assumed, of course, that he was in darkness and error—a supposition his mind could not allow. He would gladly have seen how all the ways of God with man could be justified. But how could it be done? So long as man remained a rational creature and to be judged as such, must not reason be his guide, and must he not bring all subjects of belief to that test?

Although not quite satisfied with such treatment of his views, the manner of the lady was so kind, her soft eye settled upon him so feelingly, and the tones of her voice were so tender, that he could not mistake their meaning, nor could he resist their charm. And he most ardently wished he could have but one glimpse of the view he believed she had of what appeared to him so dark and inscrutable.

Mr. Sandford was present, but he only dropped an idea occasionally in unison with his wife. There was certainly an opportunity for serious discussion; for some of the views which Roland advanced were calculated to startle the mind of one sensitive to the honour of divine revelation. But not one word escaped their lips calculated to wound his feelings. The clock had just struck nine, and Mr. Sandford had left the room, when Roland arose to depart. Mrs. Sandford said to him: "This is the hour for our evening worship. *Do* stay and unite with us in commending ourselves to Him who alone can clear away the mist from our minds—*do* now. It will be the means, perhaps, of drawing closer the bonds of friendship between us—it will be like breaking bread together."

The reference so aptly made to his own proposition on their first acquaintance had a powerful effect. He coloured deeply, thanked her, but hesitated.

"I am not worthy—I am not fit to bow at the same altar with such——"

"Do not, please do not say so; we are all unworthy. You do not know how much we regard you, nor how truly we wish to be considered by you as friends—as warm, true friends."

Without answering, he prepared to resume his seat. The thought occurred to Mrs. Sandford that perhaps she had presumed too much upon his politeness. Her countenance at once assumed an anxious look.

"I fear I have done wrong. I have presumed upon your kind feelings, and urged you to do that which may be unpleasant to you. Do forgive me—I am very impulsive."

"I have nothing to forgive, my dear madam, if you are willing to have such as I bow beside you."

She saw his dark eye moisten, and heard his voice tremble, and her whole heart was stirred with intense emotion; the tears gathered. She put out her hand, which he took in silence.

"Oh! if you would look upon me as a sister, and regard me as such!"

"It is too great a privilege; but since you propose it, I will, and may God bless your kind heart for the generous offer."

As Mr. Sandford entered, his wife stepped up to him, and in a low voice said:

"Our friend will remain with us until after worship." She then resumed her seat by their guest.

It was a short but solemn and appropriate exercise—such as was fitting for unworthy sinners in their approach to a holy God, and such as loving children might present to their heavenly Father.

After the other members of the family had retired, Roland again rose to depart, and as Mr. Sandford gave his hand in saying "good-night," the former, with still some tremour to his voice, said:

"From the time of our first becoming acquainted, I had a faint hope that we should be friends; but my expectations have been more than realized. Mrs. Sandford has this evening allowed me the great privilege of looking upon her hereafter as a sister."

She was leaning on her husband's arm as young Roland spoke. She looked up confidingly to the former, as though she well knew he would confirm the pledge.

"Well, my dear sir, all I can say is, you can safely con-

fide in her. I have, and can truly say I have never been disappointed."

Withdrawing her arm, she clasped her husband's neck and hid her face upon his breast.

Roland had never known what it was to have a sister's love; but he often yearned for such a confidant as he imagined a sister might be. And as he rode toward his home that night his feelings were more buoyant than for years before—in fact new feelings seemed to be rising into life. He had suffered from the want of sympathy. Now he felt that there were hearts open to him, who, whether they understood him or not, manifested a hearty interest in him. Things looked brighter. He felt more calm, though he scarcely knew why. Even his old home, with its sombre appearance amid the deep shades, had a new and more pleasant aspect. He had made, too, a nearer approach to the throne of grace than he had ever before. Was it that? Had a ray from above stolen upon his mind as he knelt with the circle for prayer? Alas! if he had but then, as he sat alone in his chamber that night, have followed up the impression which the scenes of that evening had made; could he have brought himself to bow as an humble supplicant, looking to Him who was the Author of his existence that he might have light, how soon would the dark clouds have been scattered, and heavenly peace shed its hallowed joys into his restless, dissatisfied, doubting mind!

Strange obstinacy of the proud heart! Proud! and of what? Its own reasoning powers? How soon they run their length and find their limit! Of its independence? How a single stroke of His hand can fill it with terrors and cause it to send forth the cry of agony! And yet too proud to acknowledge dependence, or to ask the Father of lights to shine into its darkness and impart that celestial wisdom which its ignorance needs!

And now Donald is again in his chamber. He has passed an eventful day; and as he sits and feasts upon the various phases of the scenes he has witnessed and been a participant of, he becomes conscious that a great change has come over him. He seems to have been taken up out of a dull, monotonous, insipid state of being, and transplanted into an atmosphere that has quickened his pulse and awakened his sensibilities. He evidently feels happier, for animated life is itself happiness contrasted with mere torpid existence. But the sensibilities of this young man, as they waken, manifest a power he had been little aware of, and it will require all the strength of his manhood to bear up under their keen inflictions. That beautiful vision which burst upon his eye so suddenly

and so unexpectedly, he will not easily banish from his view. At present he has no desire to, but rather courts its presence by beckoning back every particular; the dress, the form, the expression of countenance, the ease and grace of motion, the soft, rich tones of voice, the confiding, artless manner, the just thoughts expressed with hesitation yet with deep sincerity, the air of truthfulness so natural without the least affectation —all pass before him, and repass, and he sits charmed by a spell new and blissful. And the moon rose full-orbed, and her pale light fell in trembling patches through the wide-spread branches even to his feet. But we must leave him to his thoughts. Perhaps, if thoughts could find their way to kindred sympathies, his may have had a concert with those of the artless maiden across whose path he has been thrown; for she is thinking too, and all seems strange and new to her and full of mystery.

CHAPTER III.

THE old Bradford house was known in all the vicinity of Woodburn as the Castle. How it had obtained that appellation was not very easily established. Some of the "oldest inhabitants" affirmed that it had been used as a block-house during the French war, and others, that it derived its name from being the head-quarters of a general during the war of the Revolution; but the more probable reason was its massive strength. It was a stone building, roughly laid up, and not unlike the immense stone fences that lined the highway for some distance in front and separated the fields, with the exception that lime had been used without stint, and the heavy stones laid in a cement that had become as indestructible as themselves. As the materials had been laid in a rough state, and only broken into something of a smooth shape by the mason's hammer, its face did not present a very inviting aspect, relieved, however, by the care which had been taken in the wood-work, both under the eaves of the roof and around the doors and windows. The heavy cornice was ornamented with curious curves, and the doorway very ingeniously carved, pointed at the top and with lines curving toward a central figure, which was doubtless intended to represent a device of some sort, but what in particular it would be difficult now to determine. The windows were capped in some measure to accord with the finishing of the door; and although objections might be made by a connoisseur of the present day, yet the façade was, upon the whole, agreeable, and had an air of respectability which many pretentious buildings of our day sadly want. It was a large double house, with additions to its rear and one side, apparently put up in later years, and giving to the premises that look of comfort and convenience which can rarely be attained when a house is first designed. The outbuildings were plain and substantial,

and in good repair, and a traveller in passing would, no doubt, draw the conclusion that the owner "was well to do in the world," and had a respectable standing. The building was back from the road some distance, and a circular carriage-way led to the front door, with two entrances, at which were heavy gates, supported by iron rods, attached to large stone columns. Ancient trees of oak, cedar, and hickory were scattered around at irregular distances, no doubt primeval sons of the forest, left standing when the grounds had been cleared by the axe. Take it all in all, it looked like a substantial home—a place to which the memory would cling when those who had gone out from its domestic comforts were struggling in the busy world.

Joseph Bradford, its present owner, had been born and reared on this spot, and to him it had peculiar charms. Joe, as he was usually called, was the youngest of six children, and had chosen to receive the homestead as his share of the paternal inheritance. Two sisters and three brothers had gone forth with their proportions in cash; the latter preferring a more active life and the chances of increasing their capital by trade. Joe had no desire for trade; he was of a retiring disposition, not caring to mingle with the multitude, and never seemingly at a loss for enjoyment, with no other society than the old trees and the brook that babbled a few rods in the rear of his dwelling; and yet he was by no means of an unsocial disposition. He had strong feelings, and was very warm in his attachments; but these were concentrated on a few objects and a few individuals; and yet he was very popular. Of a kindly temperament, and with a pleasant, affable manner, he had won the goodwill of neighbours and townsmen, and was called upon perhaps more readily for a lift or a neighbourly turn than any other one of his age or circumstances. He was not what is called a gentleman-farmer; his father had been, and Joe had discernment enough to perceive that to carry on a farm at second-hand required a large income, *That* he had not, and, therefore, made up his mind to work with his own hands. He preferred taking the hoe, following the plough, and swinging the scythe and cradle to standing behind a counter or at a desk; and to his mind, the former appeared much more respectable employment. Neither was he, in the usual acceptation of the term, a common farmer. Joe Bradford had an active mind. He had always been fond of reading. When quite a boy, his delight was to get off by himself; if a rainy day, up in the large garret, or, if pleasant, under the shade of a large tree, and close by the fine clear stream already men-

tioned, and where its waters were obstructed by huge pebbles, broken as they rolled along; and there, with book in hand, he would spend hours, sometimes reading and sometimes listening to the gentle murmur of the stream and to the music of the birds—his mind floating away in fairy visions and surrounding himself with a world of his own; and perhaps it was this habit of castle-building that had spread a charm on his surroundings, and enabled him to clothe with ideal beauty both the home of his childhood and the business of his life.

But Joe Bradford, although fanciful in his imaginings, was a hearty worker. He had firm health, was strong in limb and resolute in action. Labour never wearied him. His heart was light, his step elastic; and every stroke of his hoe and swing of his scythe was with a will that inspired all who worked with him.

He was of medium height, well proportioned, his countenance manly and always lighted with a cheer—by no means a lady's man; in fact, for some reason, he rather shunned than courted the company of the fair, and yet he was a great favourite with them—no doubt, because his manner toward them was so marked with deference and respect, although tinged with reserve and distance.

When his brothers left their old home, and went off with apparent gladness to engage in the busy world, he could but wonder at their feelings, and had some sad moments on their account; but when, at their father's death, they urged the selling of the farm, and that he, a young man, should clear out from the lonely place, and go with them into the world and try to make something of himself, he quietly replied:—

"I never find it lonely; and besides, one of us ought to stay and keep the home. If we part with this, what will there be to keep us together? Here we have been born, and here under these trees we have played, and all the happiness of our past lives is associated with this spot. All the money we can make can never buy a home so dear to us as this. No, boys; I have thought of it well. You go and take your chances in business. I will stay and keep the dear old place; and when you get into difficulty—for business is uncertain—or when you get tired and jaded with the cares and whirl of the city, here will be a refuge, a resting-place for you; its doors shall be as open to you, and all it yields as freely yours as if our old father was still here to welcome you. But to sell this place, and cast ourselves loose upon the world, and scatter for ever to the winds all that is dear to us in the past, and keep nothing to which, as a common centre, our hearts can cling to! I, for one, cannot do it."

"Well, Joe," said the elder brother, "if that is your deter-

mination, so be it; but you can never expect to do more than make a living."

"What more do I want?"

"Want? Why, man, at your age and with the capital you would have if you sold the old place, you could go into the city, and in a few years realize a fortune; and then you could go and live where you pleased and be a gentleman."

"And perhaps come back here and see these old trees cut down, and perhaps the old home metamorphosed into a new fashionable building, and the brook made a mill-dam of. How should I feel?"

"I say, Peter," said the brother next older than Joe, "perhaps Joe is right; and besides, he can try farming a year or two, and then, if he gets tired of it, he can sell and try his luck at something else."

But Joe has been six years digging away, and is not tired yet, and the third year he had the melancholy pleasure of receiving the wife and children of his oldest brother under his roof, and maintaining them for a whole year while his brother was settling with his creditors, he having failed. And never did a father welcome his children to his home more heartily than did Joe Bradford welcome and cherish those thrown upon his care, and never will that brother forget the hour when, in the midst of his trouble, the face of that young brother appeared in his home in New York. Joe had heard of his trouble, and, gathering all his loose money, hurried with it to the city, in hopes that a thousand or so would set him all right again; but it was only a drop in the bucket. All Joe's farm could not have righted the difficulty; but it did a world of good, it paid some family bills, and saved thus his brother's honour. He then proposed to take them all home. It was a gloomy evening when Joe reached the house—a chilly, rainy evening in November. And the father's heart was full of care and grief; and the mother, with all her effort to keep up a cheerful aspect, felt every moment like breaking into tears; and the little ones were still, because they saw a cloud was over them; why it was, or what its meaning, they knew not, but they were still and sad. Joe's bright face threw a gleam of sunshine upon them. He was full of feeling, for he saw how it was; and when his brother and his wife came and embraced him he tried to say something, but it only made the matter worse. However, tears are good sometimes, even on the rough cheeks of manhood—they relieve the heart as well as let out what the tongue cannot utter. At last Joe spoke. He had been listening to his brother's story, and was at first somewhat dismayed, when he found that the few hundreds he

had brought, which, in his simplicity, he had imagined might settle all difficulties, would be too small a moiety to be accounted anything.

"I don't know, after all, that I can be of much help. But one thing I should like. The old home is almost empty. I want company. The barns are full and the cellar is well stored. There is enough of everything. I can't pay your debts, brother, if I should sell farm and all; but I can take care of you all just as well as not; and Uncle Ben and Aunt Katy will jump for joy, it will seem so like old times. Now, *do* consent. To-morrow we will gather in little bills and clear them off; then just pack up your trunks and we will all go back together. Now, what do you say?"

The brother had been sitting with his hands clasped and looking into the fire, and his wife was holding her handkerchief to catch the tears which this brother's tender interest had forced to flow.

"Mary," said the husband, "what do you say?"

"Oh! if it was not for the burden we should be to him, it seems that if I could be once under that dear old roof, I should be content to live on bread and water."

"Then, dear sister, it is a bargain. And you shall be mistress; but if you choose to live on bread and water yourself, you must let these girls and this little rogue on my lap have something a little more palatable."

And the mother arose from her seat—she was no older than Joe—and coming up to him, put her arm around his neck and kissed him.

"Dear brother Joe?"

That was enough for Joe. It would have repaid him, even if he had expended half of all he possessed. But to have his brother come too, and take his hand in both of his, saying nothing, but merely manifesting his feelings by a warm grasp —Joe had more than he could well stand. Don't mind those tears, Joe! let them drip on your bronzed cheek. They do honour to your manhood; they tell us that the heart, debased as it is by sin, has traits of heaven left. Your noble, generous nature may indeed be subject to imposition from the crafty and unfeeling; but the fountain from whence those tears are forced will ever be in you a well of joy, sending forth a perennial stream, refreshing and cheering many a weary, wayworn heart.

A year passes away, and the brother's family again leave the old home. Business has been settled, and with a grateful sense of a brother's love, the husband and father, with his wife and little ones, returns to the city. The aid afforded

during the period of arranging his affairs has been a material benefit. It has relieved the man of business of a vast burden of care and expense, and enabled him to make a better settlement than he could otherwise have made, and to apportion to his creditors what would otherwise have been expended for his family. But how do they now feel toward the old home? Ah! its old stone walls have a beauty they never noticed before. Those majestic trees are sacred; their shadows fall on holy ground. They would not have a branch disturbed, for a brother's love has made them feel that it is their inheritance still, and that so long as he retains possession, he only acts as guardian of the spot where childhood sported and parental love shed its hallowed charm on the little band of brothers and sisters born beneath the old rooftree.

Two years more, and a sister is in trouble. Her husband has failed, but worse than that, has made himself amenable to the law as a felon. To save him from disgrace, and his sister from the knowledge that he in whom she had trusted was unworthy of her confidence, Joe, unknown to his brothers, raises the amount necessary to liquidate the claim, sends the hapless man abroad, and takes his sister and her two little ones under his own care. The unhappy man dies in a foreign land, and his wife mourns for him as for one who had been ever true to virtue and to her.

Joe has crippled himself. He has interest to pay, a family to support, and, if possible, something to be saved every year toward liquidating the debt. He works hard, but keeps up a bright look and a cheerful heart. And Joe will succeed yet, unless his too generous disposition leads him into further difficulties. How sad it is that those tender sympathies which exalt poor human nature into the godlike, and attest most surely our divine original, should, in almost all cases, be connected with the want of other moral qualities so necessary to a just judgment and a wise conduct! Joe did not want resolution in doing what he thought was right, nor firmness in resisting any temptation to a mean or unrighteous act. His own pure, guileless mind is illy fitted to cope with the designing. It is hard for him to believe in duplicity, and perhaps is somewhat too sanguine. He is full of buoyancy and hope. If there is a bright side to anything, Joe is sure to see it. As has been said, he was in early youth fond of castle-building, and his fancy-pictures were mostly suggestions of his heart. He loved to riot amid home scenes with those he loved; to surprise them with acts of beneficence and love—in fine, to make continual sunshine in their hearts. He did not aspire to be

great, nor was he ambitious to be thought rich. Wealth he would have no objections to; but *that* he cared more for as a means of making other hearts glad than for display or popularity.

This, so far as we can describe his peculiarities, was Joe Bradford.

The old house is now pretty well filled. His sister and two small children he feeds and clothes; a brother, next older than himself—David by name—with his wife—somewhat too much of a would-be lady, with an infant and nurse; and the two Misses Herbert. The house is large and there is room enough for them all. In the kitchen were Uncle Ben and Aunt Dinah his wife, old servants of the family—blacks—and an elderly woman, usually called by Joe and his sister and others of the immediate family, Aunt Katy, but by others, Mrs. Supell, or rather Mrs. Suple. She always insisted that her name was Su-*pell*, but in some unfortunate hour became changed. She said it was a nickname the boys and girls gave her at school because she was so spry, but the name was by no means applicable to her now. She was short in stature, very fleshy, with a fair, round, plump, good-natured face, and her countenance was a true representation of her heart. She was a neat, tidy person, always wearing a clean cap with flying strings, white apron, neat shoes and stockings. Her feet were somewhat a source of pride to Aunt Katy. They were small and well formed, and keeping them always well cased gave her rather a genteel appearance. She had grown up in the family, and was a most useful appendage; in fact, without Aunt Katy Joe would hardly have been able to keep house. She saw to his clothes, kept an eye on the pantry—and a sharp eye, too—made the pastry, and of late years made the bread; for Aunt Dinah, although the cook in general, was getting rather advanced in life, and Mrs. Katy felt a little more sure that the bread would be properly attended to as to cleanliness if the dough went through her own hands. She was fond of all the children; but Joe was her favourite. She had tended him when a baby, weaned him, and taken the oversight of him generally, as his mother was in feeble health some years before her death. When Joe was alone, she always poured out the tea and coffee, and ate at the table with him; but when any of his sisters came home she insisted on their taking that place, and could rarely be persuaded even to sit at the same table. They all wished to have her, and a plate was always set for her; but she would make excuses, if possible, and busy herself about the house until they were through. She was very useful to Joe, too, in attending to his dress. She

would see that he had plenty of clean linen always on hand; and Joe's ruffles were plaited in the nicest manner and his collars prepared with the utmost care. She, in fact, was proud of him, and did her best to make him keep up the appearance of the gentleman. "He was as good," she said, "as the best in the town, and better than most of them, and why should he not hold up his head? If he was a farmer, he was a gentleman's son, and as good as anybody." Without Aunt Katy's care, we fear Joe might not often have been distinguished from a common farmer; for, to tell the truth, he was not so careful himself of appearances as he ought to have been.

Aunt Katy, too, was very prudent. She knew Joe had a tender spot in his heart, and, as she said, "would take the bread out of his own mouth to give to them who wouldn't thank him for it;" and although, as has been said, she loved his brothers and sisters, yet it caused her at times to send forth heavy sighs, when she saw how fast the meal-barrel lowered and the sugar-box emptied. She was indeed a valuable friend to Joe, and he thought much of her.

The present addition to the family was on some accounts a sore trial to her. The Misses Herbert she had no objections to. "They paid their way," she said, "and paid handsomely; and more than that, they had a good bringing up. They were true ladies; but David's wife was an upstart and nobody, and that minx of a lady's maid was no better than her mistress. She was lazy and slovenly and dirty in the bargain, and saucy besides. And it required all her love for Joe to keep from letting out her feelings. But what vexed her most was, as she called it, "the imposition put upon Joe. To think that he must be slaving himself to support such trollops made her blood boil." She and Uncle Ben often had long talks on the subject, and the old man agreed with her entirely. For Joe's sake, they both tried to be as civil as possible both to David and his wife; but the old man would often take his pipe from his mouth, and giving her a very knowing nod of his head, say in a low voice:

"Me tell a-you, Katy, dat young man 'posed upon. He be eat clean out of house and home yet, mine my words."

CHAPTER IV.

"DIS I call very hot day. What you tink, Josey?"

"Pretty warm weather, Uncle Ben."

"Dis wus 'an July—very hot day, I 'sure you."

"These rows are pretty long—I think we will stop and rest awhile under the big tree when we get through this stretch."

"Me like to see Dave here, now—make him puff some."

"Dave would make poor work of it; he couldn't stand it half an hour."

"Me like to see him try it any how. Why for no he work as well as you, Josey? He your brother—same flesh and blood—good stout hearty man—eat well, walk all day through the woods wid de gun and de dog—why for no he can't work?"

"He is not used to it. You and I, you know, Uncle Ben, have been brought up to it."

"You no brought up to work neither; don't I 'member when old massa alive—you as much gemman as any of 'em."

"Some years since then, and you know I had my choice, Uncle Ben. I preferred staying here on the old place with you and Dinah and Aunt Katy, and the old trees."

"Ha, ha, ha! Josey, you make me laugh when you talk about them old trees—you love 'em like as they was your chillen."

"Well, they are all the children I have got, you know."

"Josey!" And the old man stopped cutting the corn, and looked straight at his young master, while the young man lifted his face, and with a smile on his handsome countenance answered:

"What now, Uncle Ben?"

"Josey—I think sometimes you dreadfully 'posed upon."

"In what way, Uncle Ben?"

"Every way—you heart too soft altogether—you hab all you 'lations on you back yet, mind my word—how many years now since old massa's death?"

"A little over six."

"Six years—and I no blieve you lay up one hapenny. Workin' hard all the time, plowin', hoein', reapin', teamin', and doin' everyting to make the ends meet, and what thanks you get? Me no say nothing about Miss Liza and her chillen, tho the chillen is hearty eaters I tell *you*—but me no say nothing agin that; she misfortunate and that can't be helped, and she very good woman, and 'siderate, and willin' to work, and help along in the house. I no say nuthing agin her and her poor little chillens; but what fur Dave and his lady and sarvant maid come and trow themselves on you this manner?"

"Well, Uncle Ben, you know Dave has got into trouble; he has been unfortunate in business and lost his property."

"Why for no he go to work then?"

"Well, in time no doubt he will; but his affairs are in an unsettled state just now, and I invited him to come here and save expense; it costs a great deal of money to live in New York."

"And you no think it costs money to live here? You got a great many mouths eatin' up the victuals; I 'sure you Aunt Katy say the meal and the pork and the sugar go like anything—and 'sides, Josey—an't you goin' never to get a wife o' your own—you be old man by by."

"Time enough for that, Uncle Ben. I must wait until I can find some one who will have me."

"What for, Josey, you no take one of them gals what board with you—them champin gals I tell *you*.

"O Uncle Ben!"

"What for you say O Uncle Ben? them nice gals, civil—they be ladies—real quality folks—no common folks—mind me that."

"Yes, Uncle Ben, they are all that; but they will be looking a little higher in the world than to think of marrying Joe Bradford the farmer."

"Josey, you very foolish boy. An't you good as the best woman in the world? Whare any better family in this town? An't old master been 'spected by everybody; and an't you 'spected by all the quality folks far and near? Didn't old Massa Roland and Massa Bradford always 'gree together like brothers? and don't the young squire think more of you dan all the rest of the folks in the town?—now tell me that!"

"Yes, that is true, Uncle Ben; Donald and I are good

friends, and our fathers were good friends ; but you see, Uncle Ben, when I concluded to take my share of the property in land instead of money—because I did not wish to have the old place sold, and may be you and Aunt Dinah living alone, and the old house where we have been all born and brought up, occupied by strangers—I knew I should be obliged to work with my own hands."

"And what fur you the worser fur that ?"

"None the worse, I acknowledge, and I think a good deal the better. I cannot make so much money, but we can scrape enough to have plenty to eat and drink, and I think, in a few years, if you and I live, and the farm keeps improving as it has for a year or two past, I can begin to lay by something. But you know yourself, Uncle Ben, ladies in general do not fancy plain working farmers. A young fellow from the city dressed in the fashion, with gloves on his hands, and a fine beaver on his head, and polished boots, would take their fancy before such a looking chap as I am, with my plain rig and rough hands, and cowhide boots."

"You very foolish boy, I think, Josey—you no talk sense no how."

But Joe Bradford had expressed what he really felt. Naturally reserved, and with a tendency to esteem others better than himself, he allowed any personal or circumstantial disadvantage to have more weight in his own mind than perhaps the truth in particular cases would warrant; and yet he was not altogether wrong in the opinion he had formed of the influence of personal appearance on the subject in question. And he had some reason in reference to the ladies already mentioned to feel that a little too much confidence had been reposed, by one of them at least, in an individual who, but for a pleasing address and a genteel appearance, had nothing that he could perceive besides to recommend him. But before we enter into particulars, a few words must be said by way of introduction of Uncle Ben.

Uncle Ben had no other name to distinguish him from the rest of the human family. Ben had been his name with his old master and all persons of the same age ; but the rising generation, taking example from the family where he lived, added the title by which we have introduced him—a token of his respectability and kindliness. He had been born a slave ; but for some years the law which emancipated all slaves in the State of New York, who had not passed beyond a certain age, had been in force ; but whether Ben had reached the period of life which would forbid the sundering of the bond under which he had been born, it is impossible now to

say. All the answer any one got from him, when asked "whether he was free," was—

"Yes, me free nigger—me born free," ending with a broad laugh.

And in all essential respects he said the truth. He had never felt the galling yoke of slavery. He had been a sort of pet in the family, and having a very docile spirit, and not prone to any bad habits, had never, perhaps, since he could remember, received any chastisement at the hands of those who stood in the relation of master and mistress to him. He had been an active and very useful man during the life of Joe Bradford's father, and was consulted by him in all matters relating to the management of the farm, and trusted with unbounded confidence. At the death of his master, a lot of ten acres of land was bequeathed to Ben; it had a small but comfortable house on it, and Ben was at liberty to take possession of it at any time; but he preferred living in the homestead, especially as Josey was to be the master, for Joe had been a great pet of both Ben and his wife.

The reader can now understand the relation between this young master and the old servant, and the apparent freedom of speech on one hand, and respectful address and reply on the other.

The conversation between Ben and his young master was interrupted by the sudden appearance of a third person, who had for some time been approaching them across a long stretch of meadow, but had not been perceived by them until almost within speaking distance.

"There come the old post-rider."

"Hush, Uncle Ben, he is a respectable person."

"Me no much 'spect him—everybody call him the post-rider. An't he on the trot with his ole gig all the time, day and night——"

"How are you, Bradford? Hard at work! What an industrious fellow you are! Sometimes I feel like taking to the field myself, but somehow I can't make it out. They keep me trotting and, what with my own business, which is enough to occupy three hands, and other people's business in the bargain, I hardly get time to eat, and I was going to say to sleep either; but sleep I will have anyhow, let what will come—sleep I will and must have. But, my dear fellow, I want to say a word to you, and let's go under the shade yonder, if you have no objections, for the sun burns to-day like the mischief. Uncle Ben here will take your row and his own, too—why, the old fellow works like a young man. You feel young, don't you, Uncle Ben?"

"Yes, yes; me young enough to catch the fox yet!"

Young Bradford was a little startled by this reply, for he saw Uncle Ben's under-lip curl over, and he knew by that the old man was in no good humour, and he feared the gentleman might take the idea which he himself clearly recognized. He felt very sure the old man had a double meaning in his answer. But, as he saw no sign that any offence had been taken, he at once walked with the gentleman toward a large tree near at hand that offered a complete shelter from the sun

The gentleman's name was Norseworthy; his personal appearance somewhat imposing, for he was a little above the ordinary stature, and his frame well rounded, although not corpulent; his countenance had a freshness and bluffness to it that betokened exposure to the weather as well as robust health, and its aspect by no means unpleasant; his eyes were small, and he had a habit of contracting his brow and lashes when in conversation, or even when meeting a person, that almost obscured the eye itself, and he would almost always in speaking look away from the person addressed toward some object at a distance, either from bashfulness or because he could command his thoughts more perfectly. It was a habit all noticed, and some counted as an unfavourable symptom. Mr. Norseworthy was a popular man, his manners were pleasing, and his readiness to do a good turn nobody doubted. He was a very energetic, busy man. If there was any difficult job to be performed for the town which no one else cared to undertake, he was ready to go ahead and shoulder the responsibility. If two neighbours got entangled in a law-suit, Mr. Norseworthy was sure to be on hand to assist, and the party on whose side he was engaged was almost certain to win. He had in the course of years a few such battles on his own account, and the pertinacity of his resistance or assault were so well known that, whether men thought him right or wrong, they applauded and called him "a tough dog to handle any how." He was in general feared more than he was respected. What his particular business was would be difficult to determine. He had a good-sized farm and raised crops on it every year, and could converse most fluently on the best methods of cultivation, and upon the propriety of keeping things snug and doing work in the best manner and at the right time; but somehow he never seemed to bring his farm into a very productive condition, and many believed the yield did not pay for the labour; nor were things around the premises in so good order as might have been; at times, indeed, hands would be employed, both mechanics and day-

labourers, in pulling down and rebuilding, but the work had no completeness to it, nothing was finished so as to give a look of snugness. But Mr. Norseworthy had other business beside farming. He had discovered on his farm, as he thought, a very superior kind of limestone. It was, to be sure, rather difficult to get at, as the larger part lay beneath a thick superstratum of earth, which of course had to be removed. But difficulties of that sort were slight hindrances to Mr. Norseworthy, and plenty of hands could be hired. Labour cost something certainly, but the lime would be of such superior quality when once in market, that its price would more than repay for any extra outlay. He burnt several kilns of it; but from some unfortunate management on the part of the superintendent, so he said, but few of the stones would yield to the influence of heat. Mr. Norseworthy likewise had a small stream on his farm that, by considerable damming, would turn a wheel, and he could get power enough to operate largely with machinery. The working up of waste cotton was getting to be a very profitable business. Some were making money by it, and why could not he? But building a dam and erecting a mill and purchasing machinery would require no small amount of funds, and these Mr. Norseworthy never seemed to have in abundance. He had, however, a very contriving head and a ready tongue; moreover, he had a very general acquaintance with all the moneyed men in the place; that is, with all those farmers who were forehanded, who every year laid by a few hundred dollars. There were a few wealthy men in Woodburn, but, generally speaking, they always had a place for their money, and did not need Mr. Norseworthy's assistance in disposing of it. Farmers in general prefer loaning to one another, even without other security than a simple note of hand, rather than trusting it to banks. And in some way Mr. Norseworthy had contrived to gather in quite a sum by small loans—a hundred from one and two or three hundred from another, and so on, until sufficient had accumulated to make a beginning. The dam was built and the mill erected, and the machinery put in—the waste cotton could be bought on credit. So, after a time, the thing went on, and from Mr. Norseworthy's account, he was making money "hand over fist," to use his own expression. But the good man soon found that cotton-batting did not always meet with a ready sale. Times were changeable, but working hands must be paid, and notes given for waste, payable at bank, must be met, and his credit must be kept good, or the mischief would be to pay, and very soon it required all Mr. Norseworthy's skill in financiering to keep things straight. And he came to the

conclusion at last that in some way he must get help of a permanent sort; for what with his farm, and his limestone quarry, and his cotton-mill, and his efforts to "raise the wind," there was more business on his hands than even he could carry much longer. Joint-stock companies had not yet been legalized, and his mill was hardly large enough to pay for the expense and labour of trying to get an act of incorporation through the Legislature. He therefore resolved to look around for one or two who would be willing to advance a certain sum —he to take all the labour and responsibility, and they to share in the profits, but to be silent partners; as to losses, nothing need be said about them, there was no possible chance for them, and the profits were enormous.

It is wonderful what power there is in a plausible manner, and the pleading of one who is sanguine in his own cause. Often, the most prudent are hoodwinked by it, and the wisest made to err. That Mr. Norseworthy fully believed in the favourable aspect which he tried to impress upon others, there can be no doubt; for he was not a rogue, although some, in a sly way, intimated that "he was no better than he ought to be, and that he would blow up one of these days." Now, it was on this very business that the gentleman had called upon young Bradford this morning. And as soon as they got under the shade of the large tree he began:

"Bradford, I have called upon you this morning to have a free talk with you about a matter of business; and, first of all, I want to say that the thing must be a secret between you and me, and this old tree; for I would not have it get out that I was making the offer I am about to make to you for any consideration—no, my dear sir, not for any consideration—you understand." This was a common phrase with Mr. N.

"Yes, sir," replied Bradford, without having the most distant idea of what business Mr. Norseworthy could have to converse about with him of such a private nature.

"I take it for granted, Bradford, that you have no objections to making money a little faster than you do by hoeing and digging on the old farm. Farming is a good business, but small profits; that is, I find it so. Labour is high and produce low, and what with high wages and the board of the men, and the wear and tear of tools and wagons, etc., the net profit, if we take all things into consideration, the net profit, I say, at the end of the year, is small—don't you find it so?"

"Our profits are not always large, to be sure, but——"

"Let me interrupt you. I know what you are going to say. 'Profits are not large, but the business is sure.' Granted. And a delightful occupation to one situated as you are; a fine

farm and buildings, all snug and strong, and all that. Granted. And more than that, in your case, I take it you follow it because you love it—you love the very ground you work on, and the venerable trees, and the old homestead; and no wonder. There is not a finer location nor a better establishment in the whole place than yours. I would not except even Roland's, although his may be a little more showy—no better though; but as I was saying, you would have no objections to be receiving a few hundreds a year more than you now do, you understand."

"No particular objections, certainly."

"And add to that, no interference with your present business, only a clear gain coming in every year, independent of all you can make by farming, you understand."

"Certainly not; especially if it did not require my time and attention."

"That is the beauty of the whole thing—not an hour of your time, and the income as sure as the shade of this tree when the sun shines; but you must be mum—you understand."

"Yes, sir."

"No living soul, besides yourself, except in the case of one man—Sandford; you know him."

"Mr. Sandford, of New-York?"

"That's the man; a man of business, brought up to business; knows all its crooks and turns; a shrewd man, too; he caught at it immediately—his heart and soul in the matter."

"Sandford! I thought he was rich—that is, rich enough to retire from business and live on his income."

"Sandford, no doubt, is pretty well off—comfortable; but no man, except a fool, would refuse money when he can get it honestly, and without labour or risk. But I tell you this as a profound secret—you understand. Sandford, as I tell you, caught at the proposal; he is a man of experience and judgment; and, as my plan has been adjusted to have you and him interested alike in the matter, I opened the thing to him first, knowing that you, being a young man, would not see the matter in all its bearings—you understand. Yes, Mr. Sandford saw at once through the whole arrangement. He was satisfied, and closed with me. I then told him that I was going to open the matter to you, and give you an equal chance with him, if he had no objection. None in the least, he said, and went on to say a good many things, which it is not worth while to repeat; only, I can say this, you stand pretty high in that quarter. But now to the point. You see, Bradford, I have got my mill under fine headway, everything is working

to a T, and there is nothing to hinder the rolling up of profits 'hand over fist.' But one man can't do everything—can't carry the whole world on his shoulders, not long—that you know."

"A pretty hard lift, anyhow."

"That's it. Now you see, as I have told you, everything is working well; but as you well know, a man with no more capital than I can command, works to a disadvantage; that is, he cannot take advantage of a changing market. When cotton is low, and one wants to lay in a good stock, he's stumped for want of means; and when batting is dull of sale, as all articles are sometimes, and one would hold on for a rise, he can't do it, you see, for money must be had to pay labourers and to meet notes at bank—you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"So, thinking it all over, I made up my mind that I would rather relinquish part of my profits, get a couple of good, responsible men to join me—each to take a quarter, and only keep a half for myself—it would be better in the end."

"What do you call a quarter worth, Mr. Norseworthy?"

"I consider a quarter of that establishment"—and Mr. Norseworthy laid the forefinger of one hand on the palm of the other, fixing his eye away off at something or nothing in the great distance—"I consider a quarter of that concern worth—but stay, there is nothing like figures to tell the true story;" and thus saying, Mr. Norseworthy dived his hand into an inside pocket, and, drawing forth a large pocket-book, well filled with papers, soon abstracted a letter, on the outside of which, holding the pocket-book for a support, he began to figure. He was quick at figures, both in writing and calculating. In a very short time, therefore, he handed the said letter to young Bradford. Its back was pretty much covered with items, such as, "expense of running the mill," "repairs of machinery," "average cost of cotton-waste," "cost of bagging," "price of batting—average," "net profits," "one quarter net profits."

Bradford spent some time in the perusal, and then, handing the paper to the gentleman, remarked:

"It looks well, to be sure; but however desirous I might be, Mr. Norseworthy, of engaging in the concern, I have no funds at present that I can use for any such purpose."

"No use of funds, my dear sir—your name will command all the funds necessary."

"But if I give a note, that note must be met at maturity; and for me to give my name for fifteen hundred dollars, it might be out of my power, when it became due, to raise so large a sum."

"You don't understand, my dear sir. You see, I have not explained to you. I have it all arranged. You do not suppose that I thought you had that amount of money lying in your desk unappropriated—by no means. The thing is this—you understand. There is at present just this balance lying in the hands of the trustees of the Ransom fund. You know all about that, and a noble thought it was, the raising of that fund. That four thousand dollars which this people raised for that man was a noble benefaction."

"Do they call it the Ransom fund? I thought it was not exclusively for his benefit."

"By no means; but the thing is this, you understand—they wanted to raise his salary, but he did not wish it done. A strange man, but firm—true as a dollar—all above-board. Well, since he would not have his salary raised—not, he said, until the time should come when he might need it—Bellows and Graham and a few others determined to arrange matters. You see, I know all about it, for I had a little finger in that pie. They determined to raise a fund of four thousand dollars, to be kept at interest, and interest to be added to the principal every six months; so that by the time Mr. Ransom should, by reason of age, be unable to bear the labours of his office, or by sickness should be laid aside, the interest should be paid to him as long as he lived, and to his wife, if she survived him, for ten years after his death; and the minister who succeeds him is to enjoy the like benefit, should he at any time be disabled and thrown upon the world without resources. They call it the Ransom fund, you understand, in honour of their pastor, as it was raised more especially for his benefit, you understand."

Now it was not at all necessary for this gentleman to have gone over all these particulars in the hearing of his companion, who was quite familiar with them, except the fact of its name; but Mr. Norseworthy had this way with him. He was very apt to spend much time in side issues. It seemed to soften down obliquities and smooth the way in bargaining, and, moreover, showed that he was not by any means absorbed in the main object—almost forgot it—it was of no material consequence. As Bradford nodded assent to the closing remark, Mr. Norseworthy continued:

"But as I was saying, fifteen hundred dollars are still unappropriated, and I have a promise from the trustees that

they will hold on for a day or two, you understand. Your note for fifteen hundred dollars, with a responsible indorser—that is, one as responsible as yourself—will command that money, and that money will never be wanted. The interest must be paid, to be sure, regularly every six months, and I guess a thousand dollars a year profit will pay one hundred and five dollars a year's interest—that is, as I view it—and leave a handsome surplus. Why, my dear sir, in eighteen months you will have realized the whole amount of your proportion of capital invested. Only think of that! Think of it! And that is what I want you to do. Think of it—think the matter over. I did not expect you to decide instanter; only one thing I would say, I should like to know between this and to-morrow morning, say about this time—shall I call on you, or will you call at the mill?"

After a little hesitancy, Bradford replied:

"I will call at the mill."

"Do; that's just the thing. Then you can look all around and examine how things work. Nothing like a man looking before he leaps. But one thing—you'll be mum?"

"No fear of that; I shall say nothing to anybody."

When Bradford returned to his labour he found Uncle Ben had been cutting as if upon a strife, and his corn-cutter was moving as though wielded by the arm of a young man.

"You have been working too fast, Uncle Ben. I did not expect when I left you to have been hindered so long."

"That man great wid his tongue; it run glib like the brook. He run away with him yet—mine my word."

Although Bradford knew that the old man had strong prejudices which were not easily overcome, and felt very sure that the opinion he had formed of Mr. Norseworthy was erroneous, yet the idea conveyed by the figure of the brook being the destruction of its owner startled him a little. He worked away in silence, especially as Uncle Ben did not seem to be inclined to conversation.

It may appear strange that one who had made up his mind so deliberately and so decidedly in regard to the kind of business he wished to follow, should have been willing even to listen to the proposition of Mr. Norseworthy. But Joe Bradford seldom exercised much thought as to his own individual interest; and all the time the gentleman was talking Joe was planning. He did not want to have anything to do with the mill himself; but if a share of it could be secured for his brother, it might be a good thing for *him*. The amount necessary to secure the purchase was at first a serious

obstacle; but when Mr. Norseworthy removed that, and there was nothing in the way but the mere fact of giving his name, he was ready to decide at once, and he would have done so, if the thought had not occurred to him "that perhaps he had better consult with his brother and ascertain his views, especially as David, he thought, was likely to know more about such matters than himself."

We will not trouble the reader with all the particulars in the settlement of this business. Joe and his brother David made their call at the mill, and Mr. Norseworthy received them in his kindest manner, showing with much glee all the working of the machinery. He could do that without being hindered by noise, for on account of a *slight* disarrangement—so Mr. Norseworthy called it—of the running gear, the machinery was resting from its labours; but with great facility he explained the whole movement just as well, he said, "as if it was going." He showed them the dam—extolled in the highest terms the substantial manner in which it was built. The few leaks that were perceptible, he said, "were of no account; the water *would* ooze through at times." And then he descanted on the great strength of the building. "You see, gentlemen," he said, "I go for utility, for the substance, not the shadow. Look at those timbers! They would bear the jarring of an earthquake. As to finishing, *that* I consider a secondary consideration. We can ornament and polish any time. What we want is strength, durability—you understand."

But neither Joe nor his brother understood very definitely the real value of the property they were examining. The timbers were indeed of a substantial character, although the covering and the finish of the whole concern was certainly of the slipshod order. As to the dam, the most of it was built of sand. In the centre was a rod or two of frame-work, and it was through this that two or three little jets of water were "oozing," as Mr. Norseworthy called it; but, as he said, it was of no consequence, and Mr. Norseworthy they thought ought to know—they supposed so too. As to the machinery, they were ignorant of its real value. It was certainly not new, but Mr. Norseworthy had assured them it was as good as new, and he thought even better, for it had been proved.

The result of the conference was that a bargain was made. Mr. Norseworthy had a paper drawn up in legal form, sealed and signed, by which Joseph Bradford was invested with the title to one quarter of the Stoney Brook mill, with the land and water privilege, etc., and Mr. Norseworthy received in pay-

ment Joseph Bradford's note payable on demand; but that was a mere form. The note was to run for any indefinite period at the pleasure of Mr. Bradford, and it was made payable to Mr. Norseworthy. This, the reader will perceive, was somewhat different from the proposition which Mr. Norseworthy had first made; but as Bradford had, upon reflection, declined asking any one to indorse for him, Mr. Norseworthy had changed his mind in regard to taking the Ransom fund. "There are some things about that matter," he said, "when I come to think of it, that I don't altogether fancy. You know," taking Joe by the button-hole, "you know, Bradford, that fund is a sort of public concern. Everybody knows about it, and every one who has contributed a dollar will feel that he has a right to be knowing how it is let out, and who has borrowed it, and all that. Now, neither you nor I want to have people poking their noses into our business, and prying to find out how we stand—not that I care a twopence on my own account, but people in general don't fancy it. Now I have a friend—a man of abundant means—who is glad to loan money. He knows me and I know him. Your note payable to me will be just as good as if it had a dozen endorsers; but that is neither here nor there. I will see to getting the money, and the note may lie just as long as you please, and if you choose, you can pay it by instalments—you understand?"

Joe understood, and gave implicit credence where he ought at least to have exercised some degree of incredulity. He ought at least to have considered that where a man is acting for his own interest he is in general apt to be blinded to what might possibly be the consequence to others in making a bargain. It is generally the case that if a man takes care of his own interest, he is not thought the worse for overlooking what might be the interest of his neighbour. Joe did not think of this. He was dealing with one who was worldly wise. He himself, with an open, free, honest heart, had almost the simplicity to believe that Mr. Norseworthy was as open and candid as himself.

The business for good or ill is settled, however. Joseph Bradford owns one quarter of the mill and is one quarter interested in the profits—as to losses, nothing was said or thought about them; and Mr. Norseworthy owns Joseph Bradford's note for fifteen hundred dollars on demand, with interest.

The purchase, on the part of Joe, was made solely for his brother. The deed was taken in the name of the former, but merely as security against the fifteen hundred dollar note.

David was to receive the profits, and by agreement between the brothers, so soon as the note was paid he was to have a title for the quarter share.

Joe Bradford, for some reason he could not well define, was not quite as light-hearted as he returned home that day as he was wont to be, and he lay awake that night after retiring to rest, a thing very unusual for him. He was thinking.

CHAPTER V.

IT was a lowery day, and Donald Roland had given up the thought of a ride that morning, and had taken a seat in his large easy-chair; the book he designed reading already lay on his lap, and he was anticipating a very easy time without any fear of intrusion; visitors would not likely be abroad when the clouds were gathering in such dark masses, and driving from the east. Roland rather fancied such days; his thoughts and feelings were more in unison with them than with clear sunshine and blooming beauty; not because he had no eye for the beauties of nature, for he was quick to notice the varied aspects of scenery, and had a discriminating taste. But to be able to point out the charms of any particular view—to see what is lovely in the grouping of mountain and vale, meadow and river—in the gorgeous drapery of golden clouds that hang around the setting sun, and the fresh pink tints of early morn—and to *enjoy* them, is another matter. To this end the mind must be at rest, the heart must be open to the divine influence, and air and earth and sky must be to the beholder the work of a heavenly Father's hand, an exhibition of His power and love. Donald could acknowledge the wisdom and might in what his eye beheld; but to him they were but the beautiful adornings of a sepulchre. For a while he sat and watched the driving clouds as their edges seemed almost to touch the mountain peaks, and thus he soliloquized: "Whence come they, and whither are they bound? A storm at sea, no doubt. Perhaps even now some helpless bark is rolling toward the dangerous shore, or wallowing helpless between the mighty waves, or fast amid the breakers, and the surging sea sweeping the crew into its yeasty bosom; death is on the ocean and the land, and his shadow veils the sun; clouds are the fittest drapery for such a world—the truest emblem of its sad estate." And then, taking up his book, had but fairly

entered upon its subject when a gentle rap at his door arrested him.

"Come in."

As he turned to look, he said:

"Why, aunt, you need not have knocked—walk in."

Mrs. Peabody walked in, and helping herself to a chair. "If things had been, Donald, as they were, I should have come in without any ceremony; for I have always looked upon you as one of my children, and have done for you just as I should for one of my boys."

Roland saw, as soon as he met the eye of his aunt, that there was something unpleasant brooding in her mind; for she was of a nervous temperament, and could not easily conceal her feelings. What it could be he could not define; he had been, indeed, compelled to draw his matters to a close with her son in New York, and, in doing so, in order to save his cousin from public disgrace, had suffered a loss of some thousands. This latter fact, however, he had not disclosed; it might be possible, therefore, she had a charge against him on this account. For some time he had noticed that she had not been in a pleasant frame of mind. As there was nothing in her opening remarks that appeared to call for a reply, he concluded to let her go on and state her grievances. This, however, did not satisfy her; for, after waiting a moment, she added:

"Do you not think I have treated you as one of my children?"

"I have never complained of your treatment, Aunt Betsey."

"Well, I don't know what you *think* about it, but I *know* I have done the best I could—always ready at your call, and doing my best to get along with the servants, who are most of them old and used to have their own way, and not always very civil; and I have done for your interest in every way, and been to you as a mother—now you must know that, Donald."

"To be honest with you, Aunt Betsey, I must say I never looked upon you as supplying such a relationship. Mother to me is a sacred name, and I have never thought of any one filling that place since I lost mine; nor do I ever expect to have it filled. I have found no fault with your management, and I believe you have had no reason for being dissatisfied with my treatment of you or any of my cousins, your children."

"No, not till lately; lately things have been different—very different." And the good lady sighed deeply, and used her handkerchief about her eyes. Roland continued:

"I am not aware, Aunt Betsey, of any change in my conduct or my feelings."

"O Donald!"

"May I ask you, Aunt Betsey, to state your complaint at once. You seem to be hinting at something I have done, or which you imagine I have done; it will relieve my mind to know what it is."

"Well, to be plain with you, Donald, I must say that since those new-comers have settled, so many of them, in this neighbourhood, you have been very different. You seem to be all taken up with them; to say nothing of how you were influenced against both George and James, to treat them as you have. James will never forgive you; you have made an enemy of him. George, I know, has an easy temper; people may abuse and trample upon him, and he never would resent it."

"Now, Aunt Betsey, before you go any further, allow me to say a word. Did I not bear patiently with James as long as a just regard to my own interests would permit? He has nearly ruined one of the best farms on my estate; he has destroyed my finest wood-lots, and appropriated the money to his own use,"

"That is all peoples' lies. They seem to have a grudge against my children."

"I was not at all influenced by the sayings of others in my judgment of James's conduct, and have acted from the evidence which my own senses afforded me; all I have to blame myself for is, that I trusted too confidingly to one whom, as a relative, I wished to assist; and in the same way, and for the same cause, I have suffered by George. But without entering into particulars, Aunt Betsey, allow me to say that I have not acted hastily, nor with too much promptness in both these cases; and as I have suffered severe losses, besides being put to much trouble, it would be best for the comfort of both you and myself that this matter should be dropped between us; out of consideration for your feelings, I have abstained from making particular revelations to you; and the least I can ask is, that you never again mention the matter to me; and for your own sake, the less you say to others about the conduct of your sons the better."

"But people will talk, and wonder why Donald Roland, a rich man, should be so stirred up about a trifle, and should use such harsh measures with his own relatives. But let that go; I can have my own thoughts, I suppose, if you are too touchy to have me speak them out—it is an ill bird that fouls its own nest. It was not, however, about James or

George that I wanted to speak, although their troubles, as is very natural, keep coming up to me; but what has Cornelia done?"

"Cornelia!"

"Yes, Cornelia; how have you treated her?"

"Never any way but kindly, that I am conscious of."

"O Donald! do you call it kind treatment to send off that horse she liked to ride so much, so strangely, and not a word said to her about it; some say you have made a present of it, saddle and all, to those young ladies; it is a wonder too among people, that they should do such a thing as accept such a gift from a gentleman they hardly knew enough to speak to. But I have my own opinion about it, and I guess I am not far wrong—you knew them well enough before they came here."

"You give yourself unnecessary trouble, Aunt Betsey, about that matter; your guess is not correct, and I parted with Tom for the reason that he was of no special use to me except as a plaything. I never rode him myself, and Cornelia is too fearful on horseback to make it safe for her to ride a horse of so much spirit. He knew she was afraid of him, and except for my having been present, on more than one occasion would have thrown her."

"Oh! well, that does not signify? but for you to be day after day riding with them, and all that; and I suppose the next thing we shall hear is, that you are marrying one of them; and I ask you, is that an honourable way, after all that has passed between you and Cornelia? The horse was yours, no doubt, and you could give it to whom you saw fit, although to do it so underhand like, and Cornelia not know a word about it until it was all done! But that she might have stood; she has a deal of patience, and is in no way suspicious; but when she saw you, as she did but two days ago, riding along so confidential like and loving through the woods with one of them, what could she think? What could she do but come and tell her mother, and sob and cry as if her heart would break? And that's another thing. I want you to see Cornelia and try to pacify her. You know she has very tender feelings, and you must know all that has passed between you. I can do nothing to soothe her. But there she sits a rocking and a sighing, and all the answer I get is, 'Mother, it's no use—he don't love me any more,' and then she breaks out into a cry, and it is very hard for me to bear; and now, if you have any love for her or for me, you will go to her and explain how it is, and satisfy her mind on the subject."

The lady had probably got out of breath, for she stopped

very suddenly, and moved her chair and coughed, seemingly having met with an obstruction of some sort. How long her nephew would have listened there is no telling, for he appeared to be in a sort of paralyzed state. He could see clearly, however, through the whole of her harangue, the breaking out of that artful disposition which he knew she possessed, but which hitherto had not, since his father's death, been brought to bear on him personally. There might be trouble in store for him, but he must meet it at once; he therefore aroused himself to the emergency, and answered to her modest request:

"I do not think, Aunt Betsey, it would be in my power to do or say anything that could relieve Cousin Cornelia. I have not much experience in that way, and might only make matters worse."

"But you could make explanations; you could tell her she was mistaken; that you thought as much of her as ever; that it wasn't true that you were engaged to any other lady."

"Yes, I could do all that very honestly."

"Then, why not, like a dear good child? and just ease her mind. *Do* now, Donald."

"I have no explanations to make, Aunt Betsey."

"And what must Cornelia think, then?"

"Just what she pleases."

"That is as much as to say, you care nothing about her! No, Donald, I can never tell her any such thing as that. You must do it, if you have the heart to do it, after all that has passed between you."

"I should like to know, Aunt Betsey, to what you allude, when you refer to what has passed between Cornelia and myself. If my memory serves me right, you have mentioned that matter several times. Please explain what you mean by it."

"What I mean by it? why, you know well enough. Is it not all over the town that you and she are engaged, or as good as engaged? and you must know better than I can tell what you have said."

"You say, Aunt, there is a report quite widely circulated of an engagement between my cousin and myself. I advise you and her too, whenever you have an opportunity, to contradict it in the most emphatic manner, and I shall do the same."

"I shan't do any such thing; I shall have nothing to do with it."

"Very well; just as you please about that. And now, we

had better drop the subject; it is rather a delicate one, and not very agreeable to me. Cornelia knows, and I know that there is no truth in it. I should be sorry that the pleasant relation in which we have all stood toward each other should be disturbed; but that will depend upon you and my cousin. One thing you must now clearly understand; this subject must never be brought up between us again; if so, I shall be compelled to make other arrangements."

"And I suppose I know what that means—yes, I know. Other arrangements! It means, no doubt, that a mistress is to be put over us, and ruling in this house where I have lived so long, and which your father promised me should be my home so long as I lived, and you have often heard him say so. Did he not charge you on his death-bed to make no changes in the establishment, and to see to it that I always had a home, for I had been a faithful nurse to him? And now I am told you mean to make other arrangements. Well, Donald, you have got the power; but if you do bring another woman here to lord it over me, who have been a faithful mother to you, you will repent it, and the woman will repent it, too; for I tell you now, I will never leave this house without you drag me out, and then I will lie down in the road and die there; and if you choose to do that, you can do it. But, remember, I am your father's own sister, and you will find I have his blood in my veins. You think because I am only a woman, and because you have ruined my sons, I am dependent upon you, and that you can treat me as you please. But *wait and see!*"

The lady spoke these last words as she was passing from the room; for she arose from her seat as she commenced this last address, and during its delivery kept making progress toward the door. As she opened it, pausing a moment, with an emphatic tone and manner, she uttered the boding sentence, *Wait and see!*

Young Roland laid his book on the table—he had no longer any heart to read. The strange scene had affected him as might the roar and tremour of an earthquake—threatening to bring down upon his head the dwelling that sheltered him. He knew that his aunt had an ungovernable temper, but hitherto he had never been a witness to its ferocity. During the period that his father lived, while she presided over the family, it had been kept in abeyance by the fear of her brother. Since his death she had been allowed to have her own way, Donald permitting her to manage as she pleased, so long as she did not interfere with his own private notions. And he had no special reason to be dissatisfied with her arrangements; in

fact, he was, at times, surprised that her manner toward him was so mild and respectful; for he had often heard her temper spoken of as violent and even dangerous.

Two pretty serious matters now somewhat troubled him. One was the evident design she had to charge him with an engagement to her daughter. There was no truth in it, and yet he could easily perceive what construction might be put upon the attentions he had paid to his cousin, merely as acts of courtesy, and how they might be brought to bear upon him, by evil-disposed persons.

The other matter for troublesome thought was, the threat his aunt had made—*never to leave that house while she lived.* He believed she would do as she said. Violence, on his part, was out of the question, and he felt assured that nothing short of that would be of any avail.

This cannot be called the first inroad upon the happiness of Donald Roland, for he was not in reality a happy man. There were many things, indeed, in his situation that might, to some, have made him almost an object of envy. *He* would have told them a very different story. This scene just recorded may, however, be said to be the first attack upon his physical comfort, and he was by no means suitably prepared for any such blow. Being naturally averse to contention, and shrinking even from asserting his own rights, it was no very pleasant prospect to one thus constituted to find, all at once, that his home was to be made disagreeable to him, perhaps spoiled for ever, and his delicate sensibilities exposed to a curious public; for he had little doubt that both his aunt and one of her sons at least, would endeavour to harass him by a suit at law, if for no other end than to extort money from his purse. The loss of money did not trouble him; but the thought of being arraigned before a judicial tribunal—of having his private matters, and those of a character to him most sacred, exposed to the gaze of the public, and canvassed by every family in the town, was wormwood and gall to his sensitive spirit. For some time he sat pondering the unpleasant situation in which he was so unexpectedly thrown, and unable to devise any means by which the aspect of things could be changed for the better; he resolved, however, to let the matter drop and turn his thoughts upon subjects of more pleasing interest.

Of late a little change had taken place in his views and feelings, that made life to him a matter of more consequence than it had often appeared. A tender spot had been touched in his heart, and susceptibilities aroused that he was not aware he possessed. Whenever, in his rides, he happened to meet

or overtake a young lady in green habit and black velvet jockey, with dark curls dangling beneath it, sitting gracefully upon her saddle, and managing her beautiful pony with the ease of a practised rider, he became exceedingly nervous, blushed deeply as he accosted her, and was sure to be her companion for the remainder of the ride; and as the lady smiled very graciously to his salutation, and evidently had no objections to his company, and as both Hunter and Tom seemed all the happier to be galloping side by side, these rides were often extended, we have every reason to believe, beyond the first intention of either gentleman or lady. Nor were their steeds kept always on the gallop. There were long stretches through by-lanes and sometimes wood-paths, when they were hushed down to a very gentle pace, and often a mere walk. And, at such times, the riders seemed unconscious of the horses under them or the scenery around them—they were so absorbed in conversation. To be sure, there was nothing personal in the subjects of interest—they were general topics. And strange it seemed, that two who had been reared so far apart, and under circumstances so different, should know so many things in common and have such a similarity in taste. The lady loved poetry, and Roland could repeat long passages from Byron, and *she* had almost learned the Lady of the Lake by heart. Nor was she afraid to venture on the wide field of history; and it was a rare treat for Roland to be able to converse with one who was so much at home in that neglected region. It is not to be wondered at, then, that they forgot their paces and took no heed of time. But it was not only upon these rides that Roland came in contact with this lady. He was often stepping in at the Sandfords', and Mary Herbert was a frequent visitor there, and Mrs. Sandford knew so well how to make people happy, that these meetings seemed to have a witchery about them, for Roland always left there with a lighter heart.

Thus month after month slipped by, and the pleasant summer had passed away, and the autumn months had come.

But we must be more particular. Those rides were agreeable enough, and the meetings elsewhere. Roland had an earnest, honest nature, and as the golden chain began to wind about his heart, there was more and more manifest on his part a tenderness mingled with his attentions, that had begun to awaken some serious feelings in the heart of Mary Herbert. and to put her on her guard. The emotions which had been excited by her first interview with Roland had not been blunted by further intimacy; but all along she had, with her

admiration for his fine qualities, been aware that there was a bar across them. Some views which, on their first acquaintance, he dropped, had startled her; and the more she had thought of them since, the greater effect had they produced. He had, indeed, of late avoided giving utterance to any sentiments that he thought might offend; not because he studied concealment, but for the reason that he looked upon her as one so pure in heart and so sincere in her faith he feared to disturb her lovely mind with any ideas that were not in unison with it; and another reason was, that fears were creeping into his conscience; he was becoming sensible that he was wrong, and although he could not see the right as some did, he was less willing than formerly to obtrude his own doubts upon others. Mary Herbert was no coquette. She admired Donald Roland, she was happy in his society; must it be said, even although he had made no exposition of his own feelings, beyond a most marked respect, she was beginning to love him? She was aware of it. A strange feeling affected her when coming into his presence, or when even his name was mentioned; the rich tones of his voice were becoming musical to her; the touch of his hand sent a thrill through her frame. Of all this she was conscious; but when she thought there were tokens on his part of some feeling beyond a mere disposition to be polite, she began to take alarm. The most solemn instructions she had received from her father as to the great danger of an intimate connection with one whose views might be opposed to religion, or even unsettled on that great point, she could never forget. These teachings, now that he was no more, seemed to her as voices from heaven; and rather than violate them, she would suffer any extremity. At once she was on her guard, and kept a constant watch lest, by any manifestation of feeling on her part, she should lay herself open to a serious approach on his part. But it was more easy to control her deportment in his presence than to keep his image from her heart. It had been growing more and more enchanting. There was so much to admire—his manly appearance, his refined taste, his courteous behaviour, his keen sensibility; and even under a somewhat stern aspect, she believed there was hidden a warm and loving heart.

Mary had not made Julia a confidant further than to tell her the result of her rides, or of her accidental meetings with Mr. Roland; and the information was given without being asked for, and without the least desire on Mary's part for concealment. But those musings of that dear sister — those heart-throbbings! how could they be told? And how could

Julia know that the book which Mary held upon her lap, and was reading so assiduously, was almost a sealed volume, and that page after page, although turned over at regular intervals, must all be reviewed, if anything in them is worth emembering?

It is, perhaps, hardly proper to be thus revealing the hidden movements in the heart of this lovely maiden; and yet they were pure as an angel's—unalloyed by even the shadow of grossness; they were implanted in her nature for the holiest purpose; nor could she, if ever so determined, utterly expel them. The image that forces itself upon her vision, we must keep in mind, is idealized to her imagination in the beautiful garb of truth and virtue.

But all this is merely a parenthesis. We are dealing with Donald Roland, rather than with Mary Herbert, and have been led into this vagary by speaking of the change which had of late come over him; it so naturally led to a glimpse of the change in her.

Roland, after his aunt had withdrawn, was sitting almost lost in thought, bewildered by the sudden blow to his domestic comfort, when his servant entered and said:

"Mr. Roland, the Rev. Dr. Ransom is below, and wishes to see you."

"Is he?" said Roland, somewhat startled, although highly delighted. "Oh! well, James, tell the reverend gentleman I will wait upon him immediately."

There was no person Roland so truly respected as the Rev. Dr. Ransom, and there was no one with whom he took more pleasure in conversation. As the Doctor still continued his horseback rides, the two gentlemen often met on the road, and they would always stop and pass a few words together; and not unfrequently, Roland, interested perhaps in some remark the Doctor had dropped, would turn his horse and accompany the reverend gentleman throughout the ride. And the latter was much pleased to find that his young companion not only was gracious in his manner, but seemed really to be quite at ease and happy in his company. It has been said in reference to the peculiarities of Dr. Ransom, that while he was affable and perfectly courteous in his demeanour, yet, that he maintained a certain dignity and reticence even toward those with whom he was most intimate, that made them feel that there was a boundary line that must not be passed; and it was, no doubt, good for all over whom his influence was a matter of the highest moment that thus it should be—even if that line was entirely a fiction of their own imagining. There cannot be too much respect in the minds of any people

for the pastor placed over them. It does them good to feel that he stands above them, and that a sacred halo surrounds him; and sad, indeed, it is, that, by want of sufficient education, a proper acquaintance with the world in general, and, above all, of that holy fire which is kindled from the altar above, so much has been done in these later years to bring down the ministry from its high position; and woe to the Church below if no remedy can be found to roll off the stigma.

"You are very welcome, Dr. Ransom," said Roland, as he grasped the hand of the reverend gentleman; "but is not the weather too unpleasant for you to venture out?"

"It does not rain," replied the Doctor, "and I have chosen this opportunity to make some calls, for the reason that I should be more likely to find my friends at home."

"I am very glad, at any rate, to see you, sir," said Roland, as he placed a heavy leather-bottomed arm-chair before the large fire-place, where a back-log lay partly consumed, but big enough still to supply a good fire for two air-tights of the present day. The Doctor seemed to enjoy the roomy, easy seat, and as his host drew a chair and placed himself near by, he remarked:

"Our fathers not only consulted taste in the erection and furnishing of their dwellings, but also endurance and comfort, and I am glad to perceive that you approve so highly of their judgment as to continue things as you found them."

"I am happy to hear your approval, sir; for I think some of my friends rather wonder at my taste; but you know, sir, as I have no one to consult about such matters, and as everything around me is associated with those who have departed, it would almost seem to me a profane act to make any change."

"Abide in that feeling, my dear sir, as long as you can without doing violence to the living. It is true that our duty is with the present; but it is good for us to feel that we are linked with the great past, that we have obligations to perform for those whose work is done. What has been left uncompleted we must endeavour to perfect."

"I fear, sir," said Roland, "that in my case the reverse of that will be true and my life will prove a sad failure."

"I would not thus speak, my dear sir. Your life will be what *you choose to make it;* but with your leave we will drop the subject at present." Dr. Ransom was well aware of some peculiarities in the views of his young friend, and how prone he was to step from point to point until he reached a conclusion very little indeed this side of fatalism. The Doctor had

seen the colour mantle his cheek at his concluding remark; it had touched him, perhaps annoyed him; at least he believed it would remain with him a subject for afterthought.

"I have come this morning, my dear sir," the Doctor continued, "on a special errand, and I have called on you first in preference to others whom I expect to visit to-day, for a reason you will understand when I have told my story. There is, as you well know, about three miles east of our church, on the outskirts of our parish, a number of families living in rather poor circumstances, and very unfavourably situated as to religious privileges. They have no conveniences for attending public worship with us on the Sabbath; and although many of them could no doubt walk with ease, yet it is more than likely few of them can afford to purchase clothing which, in their estimation, would be respectable enough to mingle with us on the Sabbath. But whatever may be the cause, they do not come; and I fear have lost much of that regard for the Sabbath which is essential to their personal well-being and as members of society. For some time past I have visited among them, and held meetings in their houses. They seem quite disposed to attend, and I found them orderly and quite attentive during the service. But, as you know, their dwellings are quite small, and there is no room in the vicinity that can with comfort accommodate more than a dozen people at a time; everything too about their rooms being in somewhat of a disordered state, and other matters not worth mentioning have a tendency unfavourable to the order and solemnity of worship, and sometimes I fear may in the end do a real injury. It has occurred to me that if a small building could be erected in that neighbourhood—it need be no larger than a New-England district school-house—plainly although somewhat neatly finished, with a desk and railing, and benches enough to accommodate thirty or forty people—it might have a happy effect in not only drawing out the inhabitants there, but inspiring them with a more suitable degree of reverence for divine worship. I have estimated the expense at not over five hundred dollars, including the purchase of a site for the building. And I have called on you first, Mr. Roland, as I have learned that you are the owner of a lot which I have pitched upon as the most central spot where to place the building. What I wish to inquire of you is, whether you would be willing to dispose of, say an acre or even half an acre of the land, and what you estimate its value."

While the reverend gentleman was speaking Roland seemed absorbed in thought, and when the Doctor paused, he asked,

"How do you expect to raise the money, sir, for this building? By subscription?"

"Certainly, it is my design to call on our more able members and get what I can, and possibly I may have a collection taken up on the Sabbath for that object. I do not know how the people will feel on the subject; but if they feel as I do about it, I think the money can be raised."

"I understand you to say, Dr. Ransom, that you have not yet applied to any of the people?"

"You understand rightly, sir. As I have told you, I wished first to know whether I can procure a suitable site, and its probable cost, and then I can tell very nearly how large a sum will be needed. You are the first person to whom I have hinted anything of my plans—only that as I have occasionally taken one of our elders with me when I held a meeting, the idea was expressed that it was a pity there were such poor accommodations for a religious meeting."

"My dear sir, I highly approve of all your suggestions in regard to this matter; but I do not think you ought to be burdened with the manual part of such a business. I will tell you what I wish you to do. You have an excellent man among you—I mean Mr. Bellows; a man of correct judgment, and I believe very ready to do all in his power to assist you. Now, you may say to Mr. Bellows that he may go and select, under your advice, any acre of land belonging to me there. A deed shall be given to him for it; and if he will employ men to cut down what timber may be needed for the building it can be taken out of my woodland adjoining the vacant lot that runs along that road to Norseworthy's mills. And more than that, sir, if Mr. Bellows will see to putting up such a building as you shall direct, I will pay all the bills; but it must not be known beyond yourself, sir, and that gentleman from what source the money comes."

It was a moment or two after Roland had made this offer before Dr. Ransom attempted to reply; he seemed almost doubtful whether he had understood what the young man had been saying. Perhaps a little at loss for an answer, he replied:

"I have no doubt, my dear young friend, of your ability to accomplish such a public benefit, nor have I any doubt of the sincerity of your offer; but I assure you it was not in my expectation of any such result that I made this call upon you. Believe me, you have taken me by surprise."

"I hope not unpleasantly so," said Roland, his countenance, which had been quite serious, now lighted up with a smile.

Dr. Ransom reached forth his hand and placed it on Donald's shoulder.

"With unfeigned pleasure, rather, my dear friend, and that more on your own account than mine, although to have my wish accomplished so unexpectedly is, as you may well imagine, a pleasant surprise."

Roland's countenance again assumed its serious aspect.

"I do not wish you, my dear sir, to have a wrong impression as to the motives which induce me to this act. The gift of land, sir, or of the wood either, is, as you may imagine, a matter of trifling moment, and I can better afford the amount of money than perhaps any of those to whom I suppose you mean to apply."

"I did not intend, of course, to go from house to house and solicit dollar by dollar; but to call upon those most naturally interested in the moral and spiritual welfare of this place."

"That is as I supposed, sir; but it may not be known to you that some of those from whom you will, no doubt, expect the most, are, I have every reason to believe, not at present in a condition to afford such aid as I know they would be glad to give you."

"Indeed! is that so?"

"I have taken for granted, sir, that Mr. Bellows, Mr. Graham, and Mr. Sandford would be the persons to whom you would apply, with the confidence that they would not only enter heartily into your plan but subscribe liberally for its accomplishment."

"You are right, sir. But has anything occurred to injure them in their pecuniary matters?"

"As to Messrs. Bellows and Graham, nothing, I believe, that they will not, in time, be able to overcome. You are aware, no doubt, that a brother of Mr. Graham married a sister of Mr. Bellows. They were, of course, jointly interested in the prosperity of the connection. Graham, the brother, has been a partner in a large establishment in New York; and in order to assist their brother to a capital, the two gentlemen here gave their joint names to the bank at Hopewell for six thousand dollars. The firm in New York has failed in consequence of the present pressure for money. It may not be a bad failure, and may prove merely a suspension; but the bank at Hopewell will only renew the note for four months, on condition of curtailing ten per cent. from the original amount at every renewal, which makes quite a sum for farmers to pay in the course of the year. They will undoubtedly be able to meet it, but, of course, it must cramp them."

"Of course it must. I am heartily sorry for them; but they suffer in a good cause. To help their friend was a noble, generous act. I only regret that they should have given their names; better even to have mortgaged their property."

"It would have been better, sir; but such times as the present were not anticipated. However, it will not materially affect them, only as a present inconvenience."

"But how is Mr. Sandford implicated?"

"Mr. Sandford, sir, is not at all implicated in this affair; but I fear is in a much worse condition than either of the two gentlemen already named."

"You astonish me greatly, sir. Is he not free from all responsibilities in the city?"

"I presume he is, Dr. Ransom; but he has, I fear, very unwisely engaged in a business in this place that will prove his ruin."

The Doctor made no reply, but fixed his keen eye on Roland, his whole countenance expressive of intense anxiety.

"It is not generally known, sir; and I even fear his good wife is utterly ignorant of the snare in which he has become involved. I think I may say with certainty, that Mr. Sandford has become a partner with Mr. Norseworthy in that cotton mill, in the north-eastern part of our town."

"A partner of Mr. Norseworthy!"

"I believe the result will prove that I am correct, although, as I say, it is not generally known. My reason for thinking so is, that a friend of mine, who is a director in the Hopewell Bank, asked me lately if I knew the circumstances of Mr. Sandford, and whether I supposed him possessed of much property. I replied in the negative, as being utterly ignorant in respect to his means, although on terms of intimacy with his family. I then asked him why he put the question. 'Why,' said he, 'Mr. Norseworthy has offered several of his notes at our bank. We have discounted them very much on the strength of the representation of his standing made by Norseworthy; but the directors have had their suspicions aroused lately in consequence of two of Mr. Sandford's notes, payable to Norseworthy, being left at our bank for collection by a man named Tigh—a money-lender; a shrewd, unscrupulous, hard, grinding man—a man who will run great risks, if tempted by a large premium, but who will stop at no unjust or tyrannical measures in his endeavours to collect the money which may be due to him.' It has pained me much to know all this, for I esteem him and his wife very highly."

"You amaze me, Mr. Roland, by this revelation; and yet I cannot say but I have had my fears in regard to that gentleman; not from knowledge I had of his circumstances, but from my observation of the dealings of Divine Providence. Mr. Sandford has told me that he retired from business because he could not bear the worry and excitement it occasioned. He wanted to enjoy rest—freedom from care; in fact, his idea was to make *a holiday of the rest of his life.* Now, my dear young friend, it is not the design of Divine Providence that the burden of life should be thrown off while we are able to sustain it. Man, in the vigour of life, must have *something to do*—some useful employment that *demands energy, resolution, patience, and faith. Enjoyment must not be our object.* To bear manfully the load which life lays upon us, so long as its energies last, alone can insure peace of mind and true enjoyment. This world is no place for rest, until the grasshopper becomes a burden; then, indeed, if God's will, we may retire from the bustle, and in quiet indulge a little leisure ere our sun sinks below the horizon."

"I have no doubt, Doctor Ransom, that the views you have expressed are correct. I, to my sorrow, know them to be so. I do not feel *myself* to be a *man.* I can fare sumptuously if I please; I can live without care; but I often think, when life shall have passed how shall I be able to review it with pleasure? Will not the retrospect throw a heavy shadow on my declining years, and my only epitaph, if truly written, be, *Here lies a man whom no one misses?*

Dr. Ransom looked steadily at his young friend while he was thus speaking; he saw that he was deeply moved; his face flushed, his eye moistened, and his voice trembled so sensibly that he could with difficulty utter the last sentence. The Doctor at once seized his hand.

"Not so; not so; my dear, dear sir, not so. I thank God for the sentiments you have just uttered—they are a sure token of better things. Cheer up, cheer up, my friend, bless the Lord that you see and feel the danger of your situation. Your name will yet be a household word, and your memory blessed."

"Never, *never!*" And starting from his seat, young Roland paced the room under great excitement. The subject was one that had long preyed upon his mind; his views of life in regard to many things were just. He found himself possessed of abundance, with no occasion for exertion. He could see no particular good to be derived from engaging in active business either to himself or others; the care necessary in managing his estate did not require an amount of labour

that satisfied his active mind; he saw men toiling in various occupations and reaping the fruits of their labours; they toiled indeed under a necessity; their livelihood depended upon their exertions; he himself subsisted upon the muscles and sinews of his fellow-man—"a mere drone adding nothing to the general store." Thus he had reasoned with himself, and so long had the subject preyed upon his mind that he had become morbidly sensitive, and the strong language the Doctor had used, although entirely aimed at another, he took to himself, and a tempest raged in his bosom.

The Doctor rose, and taking his arm, accompanied him in silence once or twice across the room, and then said:

"My dear Mr. Roland, I have unwittingly caused you this distress; believe me, nothing was further from my thoughts than——"

"I know that, sir; but you have said the truth; my days are wasting away—I say *wasting*, for who is the better for my living? My life, sir, is a great mistake—it had been better had I never been——"

"Mr. Roland, I could wish you had not uttered that last sentiment—it is not becoming in one of your reach of understanding. You are taking a distorted view of things. Life, sir, is a blessing—it is the gift of God; and in your case, with all the fortuitous circumstances surrounding it, can be made and ought to be made a cause for intense gratitude to Almighty God."

As the Doctor was decidedly in earnest as he thus spoke, his eye was fixed on the young man, who on resuming his seat, looked steadily at the fire. Presently a tear started and rolled silently down his cheek. The heart of the reverend gentleman was moved. "There must be," he at once thought, "some deeper cause for so much feeling than is yet known to me." His last address had been rather stern; he now deeply regretted it, for he loved Donald Roland.

"Pardon me, Mr. Roland, if what I have said has added to any cause of unhappiness you may have unbeknown to me. I know I have judged from externals, from what I can see and learn of your circumstances. I am well aware there may be all that the heart can crave of worldly goods, and yet the heart itself dissatisfied, listless, and without joy. Can I in any way aid you?"

"Yes, sir, I believe you can."

"Tell me how."

"I acknowledge, sir, that as for worldly goods, I am abundantly supplied. I can gratify every reasonable desire; I am surrounded with the beauties of nature; I can indulge

my taste in ornamenting my grounds; I can embellish my house with costly furniture and works of art; but how can all these give quiet to a mind that sees such strange anomalies in the world about him, and such contradictions to our natural reason in the only book which claims to be a revelation from Him who made the world; and when I say, sir, that I believe you can aid me, it is because I have a great respect for you as a man and a Christian minister. I am in doubt and darkness. I wish you to resolve my doubts and to throw light on my way. I am willing to put myself as a child under your guidance and instruction; only let my mind be settled on some sure support, that I may not feel myself to be a mere useless, aimless atom afloat in an atmosphere of chance."

The Doctor listened with deep interest to the outpourings of this burdened spirit. And with a silent prayer to the Father of light for assistance in unveiling the truth to this earnest inquirer, he replied:

"My dear young friend, I accept most cordially the task you have given me, and the more so because I believe you to be sincere in the request you make; and yet I fear it will be a task beyond my power to accomplish. I know somewhat how you feel from past converse with you. I believe that you differ from many who allow the same difficulties to hinder their submission to the truth, in that I believe you would be glad to see a perfect accordance between the revealed will of God and the dictates of reason."

"I would, sir, most gladly."

"Did it ever occur to you that we are not in a normal state? that by our fall, the heart has not only become corrupt, but our mental vision obscured?"

"Yes, sir, but why has this been allowed to take place? Could not the same power that created man have kept him from falling.

"Would man, under such circumstances, have been an independent being?"

"Not in an absolute sense."

"Not in the sense that God designed. Could a father know how his child would act, so long as the parental guardianship was maintained in its strict watch and care? In order that the true character of any individual may be fully developed, must he not be in circumstances to act without restraint?"

"That is true, sir; but would a father who loves his child place him in circumstances that he knew would be too powerful for his moral nature to contend against, and therefore by an inevitable necessity he must be corrupted?"

"No, my dear sir, no loving father would thus act, and therefore we may feel assured that our heavenly Father did not thus act in reference to our race. If we receive the Scripture as a revelation from God, we must believe that *Love* is the essence of His character; *that* manifestation runs through the whole of it, do you not think so?"

"That is the declarative record, I know."

"Is there no positive manifestation of it even one side of revelation?"

"There is doubtless a manifestation of it, but there is also a development of evil which our reason tells us must be under divine control, and therefore permitted; and why permitted?"

"Now, my dear young friend, you have touched a point that brings out the peculiar difficulty under which you labour. You would fain look behind the curtain and pry into secrets which God has not seen fit to reveal, and which, if revealed to us in our finite condition we doubtless could not comprehend."

"Of what use is our reason, Dr. Ransom, if it is not to govern our belief? Must I believe in contradictions?"

"Not in contradictions, but in the fact that we are finite creatures; that our comprehension has limits beyond which we cannot pass. The fact meets us in almost all the works of nature. We can trace its operations, but the source of action is hidden in deep darkness, and if this is true of the works of nature, why should it not be equally true in the moral world? Now try yourself on this point. The Scriptures reveal the eternity of God. Endeavour now to comprehend a being who *never had a beginning*, and see what you can make of it."

There was no reply; for a while young Roland sat deeply absorbed in thought. It was no make-belief with him, but the effort to bring the incomprehensible within the grasp of reason enlisted the whole power of his mind, until, like a wearied child, his frame seemed perfectly relaxed, his head drooped upon his hand, and he sat apparently listless.

Deeply did his reverend friend sympathize in his agony, and ardently did his prayer ascend to heaven that the power of that Spirit which alone can subdue the heart into humility and give the grace of living faith might be vouchsafed for his help. He then arose and taking the hand of the young man that lay upon the arm of his chair:

"Now, Donald—please excuse the liberty I take in using such a familiarity."

"You cannot think, sir, how pleasing it is to me thus to be addressed by you. You know, sir, I am alone; besides yourself there is no individual that cares for my soul—no, I am

wrong to say that; but for some reason people in general keep aloof from me; whether because of my circumstances, or from something in my personal bearing, or from some opinion formed concerning me, I know not; but while all are civil to me, no one courts my society—no one takes pains to come in contact with me—while my heart has for years yearned for some friendly bosom in which to pour out its distress. O, sir! your cordiality is a balm to my soul. Call me Donald—*do*, sir, it will realize to me just the relation which I wish to be established between us."

"I accept this token of your confidence, I can assure you, my dear young friend, with sincere pleasure; it seems to me the beginning of an answer to many a prayer I have put up for you. And now, Donald, perhaps we had better say no more on this subject at present. No argument I could present to you would be very likely to remove all the difficulties under which you labour. You will find, perhaps, by and by, that the hindrance to your correct view of the truth originates from a different source than you now apprehend. I would merely say to you, Does not your reason tell you that *He who gave us intelligent minds is the most proper one to apply to for illumination?*"

Donald looked up at his friend, who was then standing beside him. A moment he was silent, and then speaking with much earnestness,

"How can I?"

"He is your Father—can you not go to him?"

"No, not *my* Father."

"And why not *your* Father?"

"O sir! you do not think—you do not realize just how it has been with me. O sir! *I have no God*—I have lived without God. To you he may be a Father, but not to me."

Donald's countenance, as he said this, assumed a stern, hard look, not so expressive of anger as of grief and despair.

"Yes, Donald, he is *your Father* as well as mine; you may not have acknowledged his claim as such; but that can not destroy the relationship."

"But do you not yourself teach, Dr. Ransom, that the prayer of the wicked is abomination to the Lord?"

"Not in a sense that would have reference to such a case as yours. The prayers of the hypocrite is no doubt offensive to God; but you are no hypocrite, Donald."

The young man was silent, and the Doctor proceeded:

"You are a seeker for truth, but I fear pursuing a wrong

path; you have been trying to find out God through the dim light of your own reason. By that light you have looked into the Scriptures, and there you think you find contradictions; you have looked into the book of nature, and that affords you no comfort; and you have examined the book of Providence, and that presents to your mind a dark and dubious aspect, and for the single reason that you wish to bring down the Infinite God, in all its plans and workings, to the standard of your own finite intelligence; and more than all, you have left out of view entirely the one great prominent fact, that *God is Love*, and that *he is our heavenly Father*. Now, to find the truth, you must reverse this process; you must go to him as your Father, the embodiment of kindness and love, and when you can do this, the whole ground you have been over will present a different aspect, for your judgment will be founded on different premises."

Donald was deeply moved. The Doctor had resumed his seat, and the eye of the young man was fixed upon him.

"O Doctor Ransom! you ask me to see as you do, to believe as you do. How can I?"

"I merely ask you to believe in the revealed character of God. You have looked at him merely as an Infinite Being of wondrous power and skill. I ask you to look at him *as a loving Father*, to whom you can go with all your wants."

"Oh! that I could."

"At least, Donald, you can try."

Donald did not reply, and the Doctor, not wishing to prolong the conversation on this topic, reverted to the subject which had been the purport of his errand.

"I have been thinking about your kind proposition in reference to that building. Now I have no doubt Mr. Bellows would engage in the matter with all his heart; but why not, since the whole thing is to be at your expense, undertake it yourself?"

"I!" said Donald, looking greatly surprised.

"Yes—why not?"

"It would appear strange indeed! What would people think should they learn that Donald Roland was building a little church?"

"And Donald Roland, if my opinion of him is correct, is not the man to care what people think, if convinced himself that he is doing right. But I ask you to do this for your own sake. Here, now, is work to be done, as well as benevolent feeling to be indulged, and in your case one is as necessary

as the other. An aimless life is one of the evils which you have been lamenting, is it not? Think the matter over. I will say nothing to any one about it until I have your decision."

"Dr. Ransom," said Donald, rising as he saw his visitor preparing to depart, "I have asked you to be my counsellor and friend, and you have kindly assented to my request. To show you that my request was sincere, I now say, in regard to this matter, I shall be guided by your advice or wish. O sir! you cannot think how much stronger I feel to know that I may unburden my whole heart to one in whose wisdom and truthfulness I have such confidence."

The Doctor could not help it, but his bright eye dimmed with strong emotion, as he grasped young Roland's hand.

"Yes, Donald, if my friendship gives you any comfort, think of me, not as a minister or pastor, but simply as your friend."

After Dr. Ransom had parted from his young friend, there were many things recurring to his mind in reference to the condition of the latter which this interview had elicited. He had known that in general he was looked upon as a young man not only of wealth, but who indulged an aristocratic feeling, and in consequence was courted by few, even of those in independent circumstances; for the reason that, in the country more particularly, any assumption by an individual of superior standing, or attempt to fence himself within the inclosure of higher caste, is resented, and the person is in general left to enjoy his own opinion, and to make the most of his own society. And this, with merely one or two exceptions, had been the conduct of the community in which he had hitherto lived. That there was a great error on the part of those who thus judged him, the Doctor had for some time believed, and now his belief was fully confirmed. He had heard his lamentation over his isolated state, and his expression of yearning for the solace of friendship. This was one error which his visit had unfolded and which he should take pains to correct.

Another very important fact he had learned, or more properly, his views on that point had received a strong confirmation—that *without a settled aim in life, the mind cannot be happy*. Here was a young man in possession of a noble mansion and owning a vast estate—an income far beyond his necessities, and sufficient to gratify his taste for adornment or luxury—with a heart unsoiled by vice, an accomplished gentleman, and with a mind well stored with knowledge for his

years; his circumstances of leisure, position, and abundance no doubt exciting the envy of many; and yet he himself pining in secret over an aimless, unsatisfying destiny! It is said in Proverbs, that "the destruction of the poor is their poverty;" but here was a case where it might be added, "The misfortune of the rich is their abundance."

And as the Doctor thought these matters over as he was riding along, he endeavoured to solve the problem in the case of the young man in whom he now felt so deep an interest. What course could he advise? What object of pursuit that could absorb his mind should he hold out to him? If business, what motive could be offered? gain was no object, he had enough. The study of law? that might be well enough as a study, and so might physic and anatomy; but to enter practically upon either profession, some inducement aside from a livelihood, or even wealth, must stimulate the lawyer and the physician. To the ministry he had as yet received no call. Were he living in the old countries, where his lands would be cultivated by persons but a slight remove from serfdom, there might be occasion for the exertion of his energies in endeavours to instruct and elevate those dependent upon him. But his lot was cast in a land where the labouring man is as independent as the man of wealth, and in many cases the happier of the two. And perhaps this last idea occurred to him from the fact that he was just then about to pass the cottage of a widow whom he knew to be very happy; and he could hear distinctly the cheerful notes of a female voice singing a lively Methodist hymn, the music being accompanied by the buzz of a large spinning-wheel. The Doctor passed the house, but it was merely because the post to which he designed attaching his horse was there. He alighted and knocked. As the door opened a kindly smile lighted the face of a middle-aged woman.

"I am glad, my dear Madam, to hear such a happy accompaniment to the music of your wheel; it is a token that you do not esteem labour a drudgery."

"Oh! no, sir; I never did. But I bless the Lord every day that I have work to do, and health to do it."

"Did you ever know, Mrs. Haywood, any one that seemed to enjoy life, who had not a life-work to do? By that I mean something depending on individual exertion."

"I cannot say, sir, how it might be with those who had no occasion to labour, as my experience has been that I must work if I would eat; and, thank the Lord, I have never wanted for either work or victuals. But, now you ask me that question, Doctor Ransom, I think of one case where there is

great abundance and no call for labour, and the individual is far from happy."

"I presume I know to whom you allude—our friend Donald—is it not so?"

The Doctor was well aware of the fact that between Donald and herself there had always been great intimacy.

"You have said right, sir; I do mean Donald, and my heart is often sad for him. He feels as if he was no use in the world. I wish sometimes he was well married; it would divert his mind a little away from himself. And I have been more hopeful of late that something of that kind might be a brewing; for I hear that he rides round a good deal with one of the young ladies staying at Crawford's; and, indeed, from what I see of that young lady, I think it would be an excellent match; but his mind is so unsettled on the subject of religion—that's another thing I do believe that makes him so miserable."

The Doctor was not a little startled at what the good woman was saying in regard to Donald's attentions to one of his wards, and was so absorbed in thought on the subject, that when she paused he made no reply, and Mrs. Haywood proceeded:

"And, indeed, outside of religion, there is not a young man in the world that would make a finer husband than Donald Roland. Some think he is proud, but they don't know him. He is as gentle as a child, though his dark eyes make him look a little stern. No, no, Donald has no pride that need trouble anybody. If he had, he would not come here and spend hours in my poor place, talking with me just as free as with his own mother."

"No doubt he talks much *about* his mother."

"Indeed he does, sir, because he knows how well I knew her, and may be because I was with her so much during her long sickness. Yes, sir, Donald feels freer with me than with any one else, without it may be yourself, sir; for he thinks highly of you, and sometimes he says he could trust Dr. Ransom with his most secret thoughts, for he knew you would deal truly by him."

"There is one thing, Mrs. Haywood, that I would advise you, in reference to what you have just said about our young friend's marrying—that you be very careful what you say to him on that subject. I do not think, with his present unsettled state of mind, he ought to take any such step. A man is not in a proper condition to engage in that holy relationship with such a cause for disquiet as he has in his

breast. And for another reason I would not, if I were you, and especially as I know you love him so well, by any means encourage any idea he may have of gaining the hand of that lady you have mentioned; for I have reason to believe there are insuperable obstacles to such a connection under present circumstances."

"Well, sir, I am glad you have cautioned me. I *will* be careful, Dr. Ransom; for, O sir! he has such strong feelings that if his heart should become set on a lady and he be refused, I fear, with his other heart-troubles, he would go utterly to ruin. I don't know but that he might really destroy himself; and, indeed, sometimes, Dr. Ransom, when he gets turns of being so downcast, I fear dreadfully for him."

"We are never safe, Mrs. Haywood, while the great matter of our faith in God is unsettled. We must have *that* to stand upon as a rock when the billows of doubt come rolling in upon us, or we may be swept to destruction."

"I will be careful—indeed I will, sir—what I say to him; for I would not add to his troubles, poor child! But what made me speak about his marrying was on account of several things. It always seems to me, sir, that if a person's home is only pleasant, it's a great help to the religious feelings. It makes one stronger to bear outward troubles and heart-troubles, too. A dark home is like living without any sunshine."

The Doctor would have liked to ask "why Donald's home was not a pleasant one;" but as he did not wish to encourage in his people a prying or curious spirit, he merely replied—

"That is true, madam."

And the good woman would very willingly have gone on with quite a story of all she knew about matters in Donald's home; but she was well aware of the Doctor's aversion to what is generally called gossip, and, therefore, confined her remarks to the simple expression of good wishes.

"I hope the Lord will deal mercifully with him and help him through, for I fear there is trouble before him."

"Well, my dear madam, we learn something every day in the school of life that confirms the truth of Scripture, that they only are truly happy who can look up with confidence and say, *The Lord is my trust.*"

The Doctor had risen to take his leave, and his fine countenance lighted up with a glow of feeling, as, with elevated arm and finger pointed toward heaven, he emphasized the glorious truth, while with clasped hands the beaming eye of the good

woman gazed fixedly upon her revered pastor until the tears started. His call was a short one; but like all his visits to his people, a word of comfort and encouragement had been dropped into the heart, and Mrs. Haywood resumed her work, as soon as the Doctor had departed, with a lighter step and a more cheery song.

CHAPTER VI.

THERE had been, in the course of the summer, a young man from the city of New York visiting at Woodburn, who, from his gentlemanly appearance and winning manners, had been received into many respectable families with that cordiality so common in the country. There was no doubt in the minds of any as to his standing, from the fact that he was staying at the house of a lady who was highly esteemed for respectability. He had come on with a son of this lady who was in business in the city, and was reported to be a young man of wealth. He had not been liberally educated, and even to those who might be particular about such matters, he seemed to be wanting in such attainments as any person with only a common education might, almost without any effort, acquire in a large city. He had, however, a pleasing address; and as beaux are not in general plenty in the country, he found easy access to the society of the younger ladies, and was quite successful in making up horseback parties. On one or two occasions, Miss Mary Herbert had made one of the number; and it may not have been noticed—for nothing was said about it—but he contrived on each occasion to get quite near to her, and evidently did his best to make himself agreeable. He had also chosen, when he rode out alone, to take the road which led by the Bradford house, and if he saw either of the Misses Herbert by the window, he was sure to stop and pass a few pleasant words with them, and would sometimes dismount and go in. All this did not attract attention, for the reason that the houses were at considerable intervals from each other, and the Bradford place, although not far from the more thickly settled portion of the town, was, by the interposition of a slight eminence, completely hidden from the view of neighbours. One person, however, had noticed these little matters; and, although it cannot properly be said that feelings of

jealousy had been aroused—for Donald, although conscious that a strong hold had been taken of his own heart, had no reason to believe that his interest in Mary Herbert was at all reciprocated ; in fact, he had begun to think that she avoided his company, and very likely that was the fact ; for although Dr. Ransom had not thought it necessary himself to interpose his advice, yet through his wife, whom Mary Herbert highly respected, hints had been dropped to the purport that if she were not prepared to receive Donald as a lover, she had better be a little on her guard ; and this coming from a quarter where she knew he was much admired, and of late quite intimate, somewhat startled her ; for although she could not hide from herself that there was a fascination about him to her that was very powerful, yet there were elements in his belief, if not in his character, which she feared. It might be said, indeed, that while her heart was on his side her judgment demurred. Donald had been introduced to young Starkey, the name of the gentleman in question, but after one or two interviews had rather shunned his society. Donald made no mention of his reasons for so doing. Perhaps if he had not been quite so reticent about them he might have saved himself, as well as others, from serious evils ; for as it turned out, his opinion of the young man proved to be correct. To one person, indeed, Donald would gladly have given warning, if not personally, at least through some second hand ; and but for the fact that Miss Herbert had, as he thought, been of late rather distant in her manner, he would have done so. She might, he feared, entirely misconstrue his motives. And it is but just to Donald to say that it was from no fear on his part that Miss Herbert could ever have any interest in such a man as Starkey. He knew her too well, or thought he did, to indulge any such idea ; but he believed if she knew the young man thoroughly she would not have suffered his presence near her.

Mr. Starkey's visit to Woodburn, however, lasted only a few weeks. But in the month of October—that beautiful month, when the forests are clothed in their robe of many colours ; that witching month, when air and earth and sky combine to soothe the heart and quicken the imagination, and almost tempt us to look upon our world as an untainted paradise—in this month Mr. Starkey, wishing, as he said, "to enjoy the mountain scenery under the influence of the changing leaf," was again at Woodburn. He did not however, at this time, hail from the house at which he had visited in the summer, and for this reason : Mr. Starkey, as has already been said, came to Woodburn in company with the

son of a widow lady of highly respectable character. This lady had two sons, one in business in New York, and the other, a younger one, living at home—a sedate, energetic, religious youth, by whose care and industry the mother's property was well attended to, and who was not only doing well for her, but himself too. The elder son had been some years in the city, and reports had reached some persons in Woodburn that he was not pursuing a reputable course. The younger son had heard something of these rumours, and from what he observed during the visit of Starkey, he feared they might be true—at least, he took such a dislike to Starkey, and manifested it so clearly, that the gentleman could not fail to notice it. On that account, no doubt, on this his second visit, he took up his abode at a tavern on the outskirts of the town. This tavern was near the river, and as it afforded opportunity for fishing and sailing, was patronized by men from the city who wished to enjoy themselves *ad libitum*, as well on the Sabbath as other days, without too close a supervision by the more orderly inhabitants.

With this preamble, by way of explanation, we will go on with our story.

It was a beautiful morning, one of October's brightest days, when a little cavalcade drew up in front of the Bradford place. Three gentlemen were mounted on rather indifferent horses, two of the quadrupeds being rather lean in flesh, and one, although better supplied in that respect, appeared to be a lazy animal, but very susceptible to the prick of a spur; and from marks on his side, had no doubt been stimulated to exertions he was not accustomed to. He was now very restless, not apparently with any desire to be going ahead, but rather from apprehension of the armed heel of his rider; he was in constant motion—drawing himself up at times as though about to throw his heels out, and then starting from side to side, very much to the annoyance of his rider, who evidently was not much of a horseman. The gentleman himself was dressed in the extreme of the fashion, and not at all apparelled for a horseback-ride. He was a good-looking man—that is, his features were well formed, and, when lighted by a smile, presented a pleasing appearance; but when at rest, a close observer might have noticed a sinister expression, not by any means calculated to inspire confidence. The two other gentlemen had nothing peculiar in their physiognomy or dress to attract attention. They were evidently not very proud of their nags or equipments. As soon as the gentlemen had appeared at the gate, a young lady came to the door, arrayed in her riding dress.

"Ready in a few moments."

"All correct," replied the more distinguished gentleman; "no special hurry."

Leaving the gentlemen at the gate, we will step into the parlour, where the two Misses Herbert were busily engaged in conversation.

"I do think, Mary, that Tommy will feel himself disgraced by his company."

"What do you mean, dear?"

"Why just what I say. He will feel disgraced by being compelled to travel alongside of that dumpish-looking horse Starkey has got."

"I am sure the horse looks well enough; he seems quite active."

"I know he keeps jumping about, but I guess it is because he is afraid of the spurs. Tom could leave him out of sight in ten minutes."

"Tommy must learn to regulate his pace by the wishes of his mistress."

"And I suppose that would be as near as possible to her gallant, even if poor Tom had to walk."

"Well, supposing it should be so?"

"Oh! nothing—nothing at all."

"I think you are prejudiced, Julia. I know you do not fancy Henry Starkey."

"I do not fancy him; and it would be a pity if I should."

"Why so?"

"I don't think he fancies me, and I could wish he did not fancy you so much as he appears to."

"And where is the use, dear sister, of talking about his fancy or your fancy? I do not suppose he fancies either of us. He is a pleasant, gentlemanly fellow—fond of ladies' society, I suppose, and being up here on a visit, wishes to pass the time as agreeably as possible."

"But why should he have come back again so soon? I think, dear Mary, there is something more than a desire for amusement, or than even a fancy, so far as you are concerned."

"I think, dear sister, you are mistaken."

"I hope I am."

"I hope so, too, with all my heart. Surely, you cannot suppose I would encourage any attention from *Henry Starkey*. You and I have had too beautiful a model before us in our dear brother ever to be satisfied with that which is commonplace."

"That is true, no doubt; but I fear Mr. Starkey is no

commonplace man. I think he is deeper than he tries to appear."

"Dear Julia, let us not think evil."

"I do not wish to. But when one thinks of the open, manly, honest bearing of Mr. Roland, or——"

"Who else?" And a smile played around the beautiful mouth of Mary as she said it.

"Well, say Mrs. Bradford."

"I thought so. But here come our horses." And the young ladies hastened from the room.

"Mr. Bradford," said the elder sister, "had not Julia better ride Tommy to-day—he is so easily managed?"

"Just as you please. Sorrel feels quite gay, and you are somewhat more accustomed to riding than she is."

The two beautiful creatures which stood in readiness to be mounted, formed, indeed, quite a contrast to the sorry nags of the gentlemen, and the latter no doubt felt it, for they tried their best to make the most of their beasts by reining them in tightly and touching them occasionally with their spurs—keeping them on a constant prance.

Mr. Starkey dismounted on the appearance of the ladies, in order to assist Miss Mary Herbert, handing the bridle of his horse to one of his companions; the other did the same in order to offer his services to Miss Julia; but before he could disengage himself from his restless beast, the young lady had accepted Mr. Bradford's help, and was ready for a start.

"I think, sir, I had better assist Miss Herbert to mount; this horse sometimes does not fancy strangers about him."

"What's the matter with him?" replied Mr. Starkey.

"Nothing, sir; only sometimes he does not fancy strangers."

"I'll soon learn him to fancy *me*." And so saying he attempted to seize his head. (Sorrel had been standing with the bridle loosely hung upon his neck, while his master was engaged in mounting Miss Julia, and was still busy in adjusting Tommy's forelock, as it was a little tangled, causing him some uneasiness.) No sooner did the gentleman come near Sorrel than the noble beast raised his head, and, snorting violently, fixed his bright eye upon the intruder, as though he intimated a warning against any such meddling. Starkey seemed to understand the look, for he made no further attempt. Young Bradford coming up at the instant, gave his hand to the lady and placed her on the saddle.

"I should think that horse a very unsafe one for a lady to ride."

"Not so much so, sir, as he might be if you were on his back; in fact, I doubt now whether he would let you come near enough to mount. He is perfectly gentle, but easily offended, and hard to pacify when once he has taken a dislike."

"Miss Herbert," said Starkey, looking up at the young lady, and perceiving that she was very pale, "you do not feel at ease on that horse?"

"Oh! perfectly so. He knows me and I know him, and love him too—he is a noble fellow."

Miss Mary said truly; she had not the least fear of the horse, and he knew it. She had petted him by giving him at times cake and candies, so that he always manifested a docile spirit when she was near him. Miss Mary, however, was more affected by the conduct of the horse than she would have been willing just then to express. If she could with propriety have avoided taking the excursion in contemplation she would have dismounted at once. She had a fondness for horses, and quite an exalted idea of their sagacity, especially of those that were descended from Arabian stock. Sorrel she knew was so esteemed, and from the peculiarities in his disposition she herself had no doubt of it. His evident dislike of Starkey, together with the few hints Julia had just been throwing out, troubled her; and, quick as thought, circumstances connected with the dislike of a horse for a notoriously bad man came to her mind. She recalled a story her father had told her of a horse he once owned; how his violent assault upon a man whom he had hired, and to whom he was a stranger, had led to the detection of the man as a murderer; and other stories which her mind had gathered of a similar nature. In addition to this, the almost dislike her sister indulged toward Mr. Starkey, affected her more than she had been willing to acknowledge; and, as has been said, could she with propriety have declined going on the ride she would have done so. Miss Mary had no feeling toward this gentleman that she cared to conceal. He was not one that she loved, or ever could love. He had been introduced to her in an incidental way. He was rather good-looking—perhaps might be called handsome. He had the manners of a gentleman, and took pains to make himself agreeable, and had been quite assiduous in his attentions to the Misses Herbert, and they, no bad rumours having reached them of either the gentleman himself or the company he kept, were unsuspicious, and took no pains to discourage his attentions, thinking them prompted only by politeness and the pleasure which gentlemen usually take in waiting on ladies. The slight disparagement which

Julia had ventured in her remarks concerning him to her sister, was the utterance of her own discernment, without any prejudice formed from what she had heard others say of him.

What were the motives which influenced the gentleman it would be difficult to determine. He was said to have considerable property—that his father was dead, and had left quite a large estate. If this were so, the small fortunes which these ladies inherited from their mother could scarcely have been an object. If he had been a virtuous man and desired a companion, he could hardly have found one more desirable than Miss Mary Herbert; but he must soon have seen that between him and marriage with a lady of her standing and sentiments there was a great gulf fixed—that is, if he possessed common discernment, and exercised a modicum of common-sense. He knew also that both these ladies were under the protection, if not guardianship, of the Rev. Dr. Ransom, a man of large acquaintance with the world; a far-seeing, shrewd man, who would not be likely to give his consent or advice without a thorough inquiry into the character of a gentleman who should make serious proposals to either of them. And Mr. Starkey's character would not bear investigating; he must have been conscious of that. Into his motives, therefore, it will not be necessary for us further to inquire. He was a man without principle and without any honourable proclivities; a dangerous man, for he had great art. He could conceal beneath a fair exterior, and under cover of a bland and courteous demeanour, even to the very moment of throwing off his false guise, a deadly purpose. He was a villain, fearless and daring.

The present ride had been suggested by him the day before, in order "to show the young ladies," as he said, "a view of surpassing beauty from an elevation easily accessible on horseback, and which would richly repay them for a ride of four or five miles." The real distance he did not tell them, nor the difficulties they must encounter in the ascent, nor that, for some quarter of a mile, they must leave their horses. Both ladies were fond of sketching, and they were experts at it, having already quite a store of fine scraps of wild and beautiful scenery in their portfolios. Mr. Starkey had also asked if he might bring a friend or two with him, to which, of course, they made no objections, and after the ladies had mounted these friends were introduced. Mr. Starkey had some difficulty in mounting again. His horse, no doubt perfectly unacquainted with spurs, had become so alarmed by them that he seemed almost frantic, and it required all Mr. Bradford's

strength to hold him while the gentleman with great difficulty got once more into the saddle.

They are off. It cannot be called a pleasure-party, for neither the ladies nor the gentlemen seemed in a joyous mood—the former for reasons already intimated, and the latter apparently from pique at the sorry figures of their horses, especially when brought into proximity with the perfect models on which the ladies rode. They seemed really to have a spite at the poor beasts, yanking their mouths and pricking their flanks, and no doubt swearing at them internally ; and as the ladies started off at a fair gallop, it required great exertions in working at the mouths and bits of their horses to keep alongside. One of the gentlemen, indeed, was obliged to drag along quite in the rear. He had made desperate efforts to get into a gallop, but in vain. It was trot, trot, trot, and no help for it ; and although the beast made good headway with that gait, and could possibly have kept in position with the rest, yet it could only be done at the risk of martyrdom to his rider ; and as life is of more consequence than the laws of gallantry or any other laws, the gentleman gradually eased up and fell behind ; occasionally, by great effort, he was able to be within speaking distance, but could not retain his position for any length of time.

The party had not long left Mr. Bradford's house before that gentleman was summoned from his work, a little back of the barn, by the announcement that the Rev. Dr. Ransom was in the parlour and wished to see him. Ever happy to meet his pastor, he lost not a moment in obeying the summons.

"Good morning, my dear sir," said the reverend gentleman, rising and giving the young man a cordial embrace. "I did not call expressly to see *you*. My errand was more especially to the young ladies ; but since I came, I learn they have gone off on a ride. Do you know how far they intended going ?"

Miss Julia told me they were going to Chestnut Hill or Chestnut Mountain."

"Quite a distance, is it not ?"

"Between seven and eight miles. But my opinion is they have not been rightly informed as to the actual distance ; for my sister has, since they left, told me they expected to be back to dinner, as it was only a five-mile ride."

Dr. Ransom was silent a moment and seemed much disturbed. His face flushed, and he began working his foretop with his fingers, a habit he had when deeply engaged

in thinking. At length, fixing his bright eye full on young Bradford, he said:

"Are you acquainted with that Mr. Starkey? that is, do you know anything of his character?"

"I do not, sir. He seems gentlemanly in his deportment, and I think his character must be good, or he would not be so intimate at the widow Jones."

"I think you must have been misinformed as to that matter. Did he tell you he was intimate there?"

"Not directly, sir; but I know he was visiting there when Miss Herbert became acquainted with him, and I supposed he was still intimate there, as he often mentions her name as being such an excellent lady."

"I fear, Mr. Bradford, we have all been deceived, from the fact you mention of his being introduced among us from such a respectable source. I have learned, however, this morning, that he is not, by any means, intimate with that family, and that the younger son does not hesitate to say that his company there would be by no means agreeable, and that Mr. Starkey knows it, and has, therefore, not once called at their house since his return to the country. And some things I have learned from another quarter lead me to think that he is a very different kind of person than his manner and appearance among us indicate. I wish all this had been known to me before, as it will be extremely annoying to those dear children to learn that he is not a proper person to associate with them, and I believe I must have my horse saddled and go at once after them." And the reverend gentleman arose, as about to depart, when their attention was arrested by an arrival at the gate of the house. A gentleman sprang quickly from his carriage, and, without fastening his horse, hastened toward the house.

"It is the Sheriff—Mr. Busby—is it not?"

"It is, sir." And thus replying, Bradford stepped into the hall.

"Ah, Bradford! how are you? Is Starkey here? I was told at Ross's tavern he had come up this way, and they thought like as not he had gone to your house."

While Mr. Bradford was giving the requisite information concerning the gentleman and his company, and the place to which they were bound, Dr. Ransom hearing the name of Starkey mentioned, left the parlour and joined the company in the hall.

"Your servant, reverend sir," said Mr. Busby, making, at the same time, a very low bow; "rather an unpleasant business this, sir."

"To what do you refer, Mr. Busby?"

"Why, I had more particular reference to the young ladies. You see, I have been deputized by the head of the police in New York to arrest a young fellow from that city by the name of Starkey. It seems that he has been playing some tricks there that will bear rather hard on him if they can be proved against him. But I have nothing to do with that. All I have to do is to get him and hold him until they can get him, or to take him down there; and I have got all papers necessary for that end. But it seems he has gone off with a party of ladies, and the question with me is, whether I had not better wait about in this vicinity until they come back; for, as he went with ladies, he will certainly return with them; and then again, you see, it would place the ladies in a very unpleasant fix for me to go and arrest in their presence the very gentleman who was their escort."

"There were in all three gentlemen in the party; is it not so, Mr. Bradford?" said Dr. Ransom.

"Three of them! Two besides Starkey!" replied Mr. Busby. "Who were they? Know their names?"

"I know but one of them—Peabody."

"Jim Peabody?"

"Yes, sir."

"A bad fellow—a dangerous fellow. He's the one Donald had to turn off from one of his farms. He is a desperately bad man, and has a deadly hatred of Donald. You know they are cousins. Donald bore with him as long as he could; but he got in with some high bloods down at Ross's tavern, and got to spending money, gambling, and so on, until Donald, finding that the farm was about running out, and the wood cut off, and everything at sixes and sevens, cut matters short by turning him adrift. For this, Peabody has sworn vengeance against him, and some people have advised Donald to put him under bonds for good behaviour; but you know Donald is such a noble, generous fellow, and so fearless into the bargain, he won't hear to any such thing as that. Well, you see, Peabody has somehow got round this Starkey, or Starkey round him, I don't know which way it is; but they are very thick together, and Starkey hates Donald as much as Peabody does. The reason is, I suppose, because Donald has always given him the cold shoulder. You know Donald is queer, he don't fancy strangers anyhow, and keeps a good deal by himself. Those who don't know him think it is because he is so proud; but some of us know better than that, and there an't one more set by in the place than Donald without it is the rever-

end gentleman here present," and Mr. Busby made a low bow to the Doctor.

Dr. Ransom took no notice of what Mr. Busby had said in reference to himself, his mind had become too intensely occupied to attend to anything in the way of compliment. He took advantage, however, of the pause Mr. Busby had made to ask :

"And do you intend, Mr. Busby, to pursue this business at once?"

"By all means, sir. I shall nab him before the day is out."

"I mean, do you intend pursuing him at once? He may possibly get some hints of your design. Does any one know that you have a warrant for his arrest?"

"Well, as to that, let me think. Well, I don't know, but I said something to Ross ; but Ross, you see, will not be likely to blab."

"But if Mr. Ross could give information to this man which would enable him to avoid your presence?"

"That is true. I never thought about that. But you see, reverend sir, it is rather a pokerish business—one man against three, if so be they should resist the process. That Jim Peabody is enough for one man to handle if he should go to taking sides with Starkey. I don't hardly know what is best to do. If I thought they would come back here, I should wait ; but if so be——"

"Mr. Bradford," said Dr. Ransom, "I wish to say a word to you ;" and, walking into the parlour, Bradford followed.

"I feel very anxious that some word should be carried to these ladies immediately. As you see, in their innocence and ignorance of the state of things, they may be placed in circumstances of alarm and mortification. Who can I get to carry word to them?"

"I will go with pleasure. And yonder I see Mr. Roland coming this way."

"Mr. Roland ! Where? Call him by all means."

In a few moments Mr. Roland entered the house, with evident alarm pictured on his fine countenance. Bradford had opened the matter on their way in. Mr. Busby, too, had a word to say, and with a few words from Dr. Ransom he seemed to comprehend the whole case.

"I am very glad, I happened to come on Hunter to-day. Is Sorrel at home?"

"Miss Mary Herbert has him, but Bravo is equally good on a long pull."

"Then have him up, my dear fellow, in less than no time.

We have not a moment to spare." Bradford at once left the room.

"Mr. Busby, you will, of course, go at once in pursuit of that man?"

"You think it best, then?"

"I think when he finds the ladies have chosen to place themselves under another escort, and his occupation gone, he will be very unlikely to return this way; and I think will not be very anxious to appear in these parts. My opinion is, you had better not lose a moment. Bradford and I have fleet horses, and can go three miles to your one. We shall take a shorter route than that by the road, by going through the woods, and across fields where you cannot drive."

Mr. Busby now beckoned Mr. Roland one side.

"I tell you what, Donald," (Mr. Busby was much older than Roland, and, being a free and easy sort of person, and withal kind-hearted, was on familiar terms with most persons in the place—he had known Donald from a boy,) "have you a pistol with you?" This was said in a very low voice.

"Pistol! no, I never carry one."

"You have one at home?"

"An old one of my father's, yes, but what of it."

"I tell you; you see I have not said before the Doctor here all I know. I did not wish to alarm him, but that fellow Starkey is a desperate, bad man—armed no doubt. Chestnut Hill is a terribly lonely place—not a house within two miles of it. Jim is, I almost think, not much better than Starkey. Jim has a grudge against you, and Starkey hates you, too; your life would not be worth much in a scuffle with them, and sure as you attempt to interfere in taking those ladies under your care, there will be trouble."

"I do not fear them, Mr. Busby; they are both cowards, and my loaded whip would lay them both on the ground before they could draw their weapons, if they have any; if you feel uneasy, Mr. Busby, you had better take one or two hands with you; you can, no doubt, pick them up by the way; but by all means hasten your departure."

"Well, well, now you mention it, perhaps I had better do so; I'll stop for Ned—Ned Saunders. Ned, you know, would like just such a scrape. Well, I'm off." And so saying, Mr. Busby hurried from the house, and drove off at quite a smart trot.

Almost immediately as he left, Bradford was at the gate ready mounted, and Roland parting from Dr. Ransom with the assurance on his part that "Bradford and he would no doubt overtake the company before they reached Chestnut

Hill," mounted his favourite steed, and the two gentlemen, pursuing the highway a short distance, turned from it into a lane leading to the woods, at a fair round trot, not caring to make extra speed until beyond observation.

"I think, Bradford," said Donald, "our best course will be to take the lane by the river; what do you say?"

"It will be the longest road; but as we shall be less exposed to observation, and can make what speed we please, a mile or two in that case will be of no consequence."

"Then speed it is," said Donald, and with a word to his horse, the noble beast started with a bound as though stimulated by the cry of the hounds. Bradford's horse was equally spirited, and excited by the stimulus of company, both horses bore their riders at a furious pace through the narrow woodpath, and their heavy tramp echoing from the dense forest, started the blue jays from their perch, whose cry was the only sound of life which fell on the ears of the horsemen; even this, however, was probably unnoticed, so intently were their fears excited for those to whose rescue they were hastening. Roland especially was wrought up to the highest pitch of feeling. He knew more of the world than his companion; he had, as we have seen, a contemptuous opinion of Starkey, formed merely from a slight acquaintance; but within the last half-hour, he had learned enough to convince him that he was a villain of the deepest dye, and the deception he had practised on Miss Herbert as to the distance and the nature of the ground in the vicinity of Chestnut Hill, although under common circumstances of little consequence, now filled him with most serious alarm.

Four miles, at their rapid rate, were soon passed, and they had just turned into a more open road, although not the public highway, when far ahead a horse was seen coming toward them. In a few moments Roland exclaimed:

"Bradford, there comes Tom!"

"You think so."

"I can tell him a mile off; spur on, spur on!" and for a few moments both horses flew at the extent of their speed, Roland a short distance ahead. As they drew near to the pony, the latter slackened his pace, which was a gentle trot, and soon stood perfectly still, apparently alarmed.

Roland reining up his horse, motioned to Bradford to stop.

"Let me go up to him; he will no doubt recognize me and Hunter, too. I see he has his bridle and saddle on; something wrong has taken place. Miss Julia has sent him off, thinking his return without a rider would alarm their friends, and assistance would be sent."

"But may she not have fallen off?"

"He would not have left her in that case."

"Why should he have left the highway for this out-of-the-way road?"

"He knows this road well, and I do not believe he has been in the highway."

Roland, now walking his horse, approached Tom, who stood with head erect and ears pointed forward, apparently alarmed. A whistle from his old master at once allayed his fears; he whinnied, and was answered by Hunter. Roland then rode up, and taking Tom by the bridle, saw a scrap of paper pinned to the saddle-cloth; he seized it and read:

"Help! woods near the spring on Chestnut Hill!"

"Which road shall we take?" said Bradford.

"The one Tom has come on, if we can find which that is," and thus saying, Roland led the pony a few rods by his side, and then throwing the reins over the pommel of the saddle, chirruped to him, and off he went on a fair trot, crossing and recrossing the road apparently to see whether his master was following. A mile was passed over in this way, when suddenly the pony turned into the low scrub woods that skirted the road; but perceiving his master about to continue on, returned again.

Roland paused, and springing from his horse, began examining the road to ascertain, if possible, whether he could find traces of Tom's shoes beyond the spot where he had turned off.

"Can it be possible," said Bradford, "that the horse has come by that track into which he turned?"

"I think it more than probable; I believe we had better try it."

"The road must wind there very much, if it leads to Chestnut Hill. Will the pony, you think, go ahead through such a wild-looking path?"

We can try him." And Roland was about to lead Tom into the path, when Bradford called to him:

"Donald, there is a man on horseback ahead of us; he has turned his horse, and seems to be waiting for us."

Roland saw the movement, and the two riders hastened toward him, Tom following at a brisk trot. Before they were near enough to address him, the man turned his horse, and again went on his way.

"Roland," said Bradford, "that fellow is one of the party, but he makes no effort to get out of our way."

As they came up, Bradford asked in a quick, earnest manner:

"Where is the rest of your party?"

"I suppose by this time they are well on their way to New York."

"Where are the ladies, then?"

"The ladies! gone with them, I suppose."

"Bradford," said Roland, with great earnestness, "what does he mean?"

"I will tell you, sir, what it means," replied the stranger. "I fear it means no good. And it was only by accident I discovered the plot. I was invited by Starkey to join him in a little adventure this morning. He said he was engaged to be married to a young lady who had considerable property; that her friends were opposed to the match, but that the girl was ready to go off with him and get married in New York; that she and her sister were to start with them as if merely for a ride to Chestnut hill; that a carriage was to be in readiness there to take them on to the city. I thought there could be no great harm in the thing, although when I saw who the ladies were, I began to have some doubts about the matter. My horse had troubled me very much, as I am not much used to riding, and when we turned off on that road yonder to go through the woods, I made up my mind to return; and being a little behind the rest, I called to Peabody, and when he came up, I said:

"'My horse is such an ungainly animal under the saddle, I shall not go any further.'

"'What,' said he, 'you are not going to shirk out now?'

"'Shirk out of what?' said I.

"'You know well enough,' said he; and with that he called to Starkey.

"And when Starkey came up, and found I was determined to go back, he flew into a horrible rage, and swore I should go, or he would shoot me. I told him to shoot away; but I suppose he was afraid any violence just then might alarm the girls, as we were not a great ways from a house; so I turned my horse round, and came off. But I feel convinced, the more I think the whole thing over, that there is deviltry about it some way."

Roland was intensely excited during the recital, and could with difficulty restrain himself from starting off at full speed. The moment the man paused, he quickly asked:

"Where shall we find the carriage?"

"That I do not know. It must be on some other road than the one the party took. No carriage can go on that."

"Which way shall we go, Bradford?"

"Straight ahead, then, by all means."

And off they flew, urging their horses to the utmost speed.

We must now leave them, in order to follow the ladies on their fearful ride.

The party did not continue on the highway for more than three miles, when a turn was made into a road that forked off very gradually, at first running nearly in the same direction, and skirting an elevation of ground that intervened and obstructed a view of the road they had left. This moderate rise of ground increased in altitude as they advanced, and soon began to present the wild aspect of mountain scenery—its face covered with scrub cedars, mingled with chestnut and ash, springing out of what seemed a soil of rock, broken, however, into fragments, and thus affording openings through which the forest had forced its way.

One solitary house was passed not far from the commencement of the road, and beyond this tenement the path assumed the character of a mere opening into the forest that now spread far around. It had, probably, been used in carting timber and fuel from the surrounding hills; for the present small growth told plainly that the axe had been extensively used not many years since. In its present condition, however, no wheel vehicle could possibly traverse it. Rivulets from the hills had torn across and broken it into gullies, and stones had rolled down upon it, and occasionally fallen trees formed a serious obstruction.

Miss Mary Herbert, under other circumstances, would have enjoyed the wild scenery, but from the commencement of the ride she had been depressed in spirit, and some occurrences on the way, trifling in themselves, had tended to increase the depression. Besides the strange conduct of the horse she rode, in his manifestation of antipathy to Starkey, she had noticed, as she thought, the passing of some conventional signs between him and his companions just before entering this road—a mere trifle of itself; but not long after, and when they had passed over some two miles, there seemed to have arisen a difficulty with the gentleman who had, from the first, from reasons already stated, been a laggart. At a call from him, the one who had been more particularly the companion of Miss Julia, left her side and rode back to meet him. After some rather loud talking, they halloed to Starkey, who, on joining them, used, as near as the ladies could understand, threatening language. But perhaps they guessed this rather from the gestures of the gentleman than from anything they could hear distinctly. The result, however, was, that the one who had occasioned the halt very unceremoniously turned his horse's head toward home and rode off.

"A pretty fellow that!" said Starkey, as the two gentlemen rejoined the ladies.

"What is the difficulty?" said Julia.

"Oh! he's a fool, that's all; the fact is, he is—he is no rider; he complains of his horse. Let him go. His absence is better than his company; don't you say so, Jim?"

"Yes, by a darned sight."

The language was not elegant, it must be confessed; nor was the tone of voice, nor the loud laugh that followed, calculated to allay any fears that may already have troubled the elder lady; her sister looked somewhat surprised, and the colour was deeper than usual on her fair cheek. Mary observed it, and would gladly have whispered to her that "they had better go no further," but they were not near enough to speak without being heard, and it would require some little concert to frame an excuse for returning. Mary, however, ventured to ask:

"How far are we, Mr. Starkey, from Chestnut Hill?"

"Well, I should think a mile or two. Do you mean from the summit?"

"Of course."

"Oh! well, I cannot say exactly. You will notice we are on pretty high ground now. We have been ascending for some time. The view begins to be charming already. Cast your eye yonder." And as he drew close to Sorrel, and pointed over the horse's head in the direction he wished her to look, the beast started back and glared at him in the same furious manner as at the commencement of their ride.

"That's a dangerous horse; he had like to have thrown you; he has alarmed you!"

"Oh! by no means. He is perfectly safe. He probably started for fear of the whip. He is very sensitive about having his head interfered with. 'There, there, Sorrel!' See how soon a little patting of my hand calms him."

The horse was, indeed, almost immediately brought into a state of quietude, and went on his way as usual. But Miss Mary was not herself so much at rest as Sorrel appeared to be. She had become disgusted with the conduct of her companions. All at once the character of Starkey had completely changed to her view, and his vulgarity was not to be mistaken. As to the other, understanding him to be a cousin of Donald Roland, she felt a little more complaisancy, although she could not hide from herself the fact that he was a complete contrast to that gentleman in appearance and manners; yet the relationship gave her some ground for confidence. Still she wished the ride at an end, and was resolved to shorten it

if possible. Her sister, too, she noticed was unusually silent for her, and she had little doubt was as willing as herself to turn their faces homeward. While thus pondering unpleasant thoughts for some time, at length she asked:

"Is the road as bad as this all the way?" They had just passed a ravine covered with loose stones and decayed branches.

"Well, there is no great difference; but your horse does not appear to mind it—he looks quite fresh."

"Perhaps not, but his rider does."

"Shall we dismount, then? Walking may refresh you. I feel like it myself."

"Oh! by no means. I should be obliged to lead him, for he would let no one else."

"I should like to try him, and see who would be master. I think if I had one good grip of his bridle, he would learn manners."

"I hope the experiment will not be necessary; but where does that road lead, Mr. Starkey? It seems a more open one than this."

"I cannot say precisely, but from its direction it must lead into a cross-road you will remember our passing just before we left the highway."

The road in question passed so near to the one they were on that Miss Herbert imagined they were about to enter upon it, it being so much more inviting than the one they were on; but instead, a sudden turn led them away from it, and in a few minutes they encountered the ascent to the summit for which they were bound.

"Here we are," said Starkey, springing from his horse and tying him to a sapling.

"I thought you said we could ride to the top," replied Miss Herbert.

"They can ride that choose to try it. I shan't kill this horse in making any such attempt."

Julia still remained mounted, although Mr. Peabody had followed the example of Mr. Starkey, and was standing ready to assist her from the saddle. She came up to the side of her sister.

"You are not going to attempt that road with Sorrel, are you, sister?"

"By no means—we will not dismount." This she said in a whisper, giving her sister at the same time a very significant look, and then turning to Mr. Starkey—

"I should prefer, Mr. Starkey, since we cannot reach our destination on horseback, to go no further. I must insist upon it."

"What's the matter? An't afraid, are you?"

"Afraid! Afraid of what, sir?"

"Oh! nothing. There are no bears here, I believe. But surely you will not shirk out—so near the end of our journey." And, as he said this, he kept drawing near to Sorrel, with his eye fixed upon the horse, who, in turn, looked fixedly at him. With a sudden spring, Starkey grabbed at the reins near the horse's mouth; but Sorrel was too quick for him, and, with evident rage, caught the arm of his assailant between his teeth, and fairly lifted him from the ground, tearing his coat, and inflicting a severe and dangerous wound.

Starkey fairly howled with rage, uttering horrid curses while in the act of running round to find a club, no doubt with the intent of wreaking vengeance on the horse, regardless of what the consequences might be to the almost paralyzed lady. At that instant, Julia, who was now close by her sister, had presence of mind enough to say to her:

"Mary, rein about quickly or the horse may be killed."

In an instant they were off, and not a moment too soon. Starkey had seized a weapon, and with the fury of a madman, was rushing toward them. As he saw the horses with a bound start on their way, he threw the weapon with all the force he could command, evidently aiming it not at the horse but his rider, for the lady received the blow on her left shoulder; the distance alone prevented what doubtless the villain designed, to throw her from the saddle. The injury, however, whatever it might be, had no effect just then but to arouse the energies of Miss Herbert. She caught the reins from her left hand which was now helpless, and calling to Julia, who was turning by the road they had just traversed:

"This way, Julia, this way," crossed the broken ground that separated the two roads, taking the one which, as Starkey had told her, led in all probability to the highway; at least it being a smooth path in comparison with that by which they had ascended the mountain, she cared not much where it led, so that it enabled them to make speed.

But a difficulty now arose of a serious nature; the shock which Miss Mary Herbert had received from the scene they had just witnessed, added to the violent pain from the blow, was more than her nerves could endure; and even the strong desire to escape from the hands of ruffians was not sufficient to sustain her but a short time. She began to suffer from insupportable weakness. They had probably gone a little over a mile, when it increased so rapidly that she had barely strength to say,

"Julia, quick—help me off."

The sister, springing from her saddle, was by her side in an instant.

"Dear Mary, what is it? Does your arm pain you so?"

There was no reply. Julia saw that she was deadly pale, and after assisting her to dismount, it required all her strength in supporting her sister to a clear spot on which she could recline. Leaving her for a moment, she secured Sorrel, and tearing a small strip of paper from her pocket, wrote a few words on it, and pinning it to the saddle-cloth of Tom, started him off, hoping some one might notice him, and help be obtained, before those from whom they had just fled should reach them—for she had little doubt they would be pursued—and as speedily as possible returned to do what she could for her sister. Mary had not lost her consciousness; she complained only of weakness. A spring of water happily was not far off, but Julia had no other means of conveyance than the palm of her hand, a small receptacle truly, yet the little which by that means she procured did much good; and by repeated supplies at length had the happiness of seeing her sister revive, so as to be able to sit up. It seemed, however, a long time to her that they were thus detained, as every moment was too precious to be lost.

"Do you think, dear sister," she said, as soon as Mary was somewhat revived, "you can mount your horse again? and I will jump on behind you."

"Where is Tom?"

"I have sent him off in hopes that he will go home and alarm our friends and bring us help."

"Yes, I am able to mount; but hark, Julia, do you not hear the distant tramp of horses?"

Julia did not reply. The colour had left her cheek, and like a marble statue she stood apparently dumb with alarm. She heard but too plainly; they were coming with great speed. Mary sprang to her feet, but at that instant, just around the curve in the road, two horsemen on the full jump appeared before them, and springing from his saddle, Donald Roland grasped her outstretched hand. A moment she looked up at his noble countenance, now indeed more stern than she had ever seen it, for he was intensely excited, and then a rush of feeling overpowered her, and covering her face, gave vent to an agony of tears. It was no time to stand on conventionalities. Roland clasped his arm around the trembling, agitated girl.

"Fear nothing now, my dear Miss Herbert. God has interposed, and you are safe."

A thrill of exquisite joy awoke every tender emotion of her

heart. It was the first time she had ever heard him acknowledge an Almighty Providence. It was the first time he had ever lisped a sentence in her hearing that manifested a peculiar interest. She felt his strong, manly arm sustaining her, and if it had been the arm of her own dear Willie that was now embracing her, she could not have felt more secure or confiding.

Julia was weeping too; but Joe Bradford, who could have taken her up in his strong arms and placed her on a horse with as much ease as if she had been a child of six years old, would no more have thought of offering consolation, or doing anything in that way, than he would of running away, should she or any other lady need his protection. There he stood, looking very serious, to be sure, holding the bridle of his horse, and, as a relief to his feelings—for he had enough of that—patting the neck of his good beast, and smoothing down his forelock.

Roland had led Mary to a seat—a very commodious one, which his quick eye had discovered, a rock covered with moss—and as he withdrew his arm and stood before her, she lifted her face, glowing with excitement, while the tears still dripped upon her lovely cheek.

"Again you appear as my deliverer. But oh! what is this? your hand is bleeding! You have been hurt!" And she sprang from her seat.

"Oh! it is not much—a mere flesh-wound. The ball has merely broken the skin."

"The ball! What do you mean?"

"We will not enter into particulars now. Let it suffice for the present that you are safe; and thank God things are no worse."

While Roland said this, he was endeavouring to untie a handkerchief which was bound about his wrist, and which was now beginning to be saturated with blood; but both ladies interposed to do it for him.

"You are not used to the sight of blood," he said. "Brad ford, I shall be obliged to have your aid again."

"But I *shall* and *will* help. The sight of blood will not trouble me now, and I fear it has been shed in my defence."

"And most willingly, even to the last drop, had that sacrifice been necessary."

This was said in so low a voice that probably neither Bradford nor Julia heard it.

Mary made no reply; she was busy untying a handkerchief, and about to unwind it. Bradford had come up, and offered to take her place; but seeing how determined she was at her work, did not like to interfere.

"Mr. Bradford, if we had a little cold water——"

"I can get it," said Julia, and off she ran.

"I think, if there is water near, we had better adjourn to it Miss Julia has nothing to carry it in."

Bradford, however, had gone with her, and, filling his cap, they were back in a moment.

Mary had bared the wrist. She heeded no entreaties on the part of Roland. The flesh had been torn, but not entirely separated. Bradford, in binding it up, had not been careful to replace the severed part, his only anxiety being to stanch the bleeding. Miss Herbert went more understandingly to work, with the tenderest care. She replaced each broken fibre, and then saturating a small muslin collar which she took from her neck with water, made a compress, placing it on the wound, binding it tightly with her own and her sister's handkerchief. Roland had given up remonstrating when he found it availed nothing, and, seated on the rock where at the first he had placed her, quietly yielded to her management. When all was accomplished, he made no formal acknowledgment: he did not even say "Thank you;" his mind was too intensely agitated. Thoughts and feelings which had for months been floating about his heart were now gathering to a point. He had admired the beautiful girl; he had enjoyed her society, and was conscious of desire to see her more and more frequently. But now a charm seemed to emanate from her, and encircle him with its power, that was altogether new and to him very strange. There was a fascination in her determined will, for it was by that she had arisen superior to her feminine weakness. He felt under a spell as her trembling, delicate fingers, stained with his own blood, were skilfully adjusting the torn flesh to its natural position, and binding on the compress. "That blood-stained little collar he should hereafter keep, a memento of her ready thought and unselfish spirit."

It was now thought best to prepare for the ride home. Bradford had assisted Julia to the saddle, and Roland arose from the seat he had been occupying. His mind had been in a trance; for when his hand had been dressed, and he heard Bradford speak of their mounting, he made no reply; and not until Julia was in readiness for a start, and he saw the former untying Sorrel, did he seem to comprehend the circumstances. He took one of the hands which had been doing him such good service.

"This episode in my life has bewildered me. You must think me strangely selfish to have allowed you to do all this, and yet with no expression of thanks. Pardon my

remissness, and be assured the feeling of gratitude is not wanting."

As he said this, Mary Herbert was looking at him as though she too were spell-bound. His countenance had lost that stern cast which she had noticed on his arrival; nor did it resemble his usual calm and rather indifferent aspect. It was earnest, glowing, and unusually mild. His dark eye was softened, she almost thought it was dimmed with moisture. His whole soul seemed to beam forth an honest, intense emotion. He needed not to have said what he did; that look assured her of gratitude. But it told of something far beyond that. She felt as if a great secret had been revealed, and a thrill, like an electric shock, caused her heart to quiver. Instinctively her eye fell a moment, ere she replied:

"If there is anything due to each other on the score of gratitude, I feel very sure I am the debtor; for I am convinced you have been instrumental in delivering me and my sister from great peril; but how, I must be ignorant of until you have opportunity for explanation."

"Mr. Bradford knows all, and will, no doubt, when you request it, unfold the riddle. But one thing I can assure you—a great light is shining around this whole affair. Never before have I had such proof of a particular Providence."

"Oh! how glad I am to hear this from your own lips! I almost rejoice at what has happened, if such a result has been obtained."

"Please do not say so; you little know from what a scene of trial you have been delivered. Shall I assist you?"

Bradford had just then brought up Sorrel.

"I forbid, positively, any attempt on your part to do any such thing, and I must ask Mr. Bradford to allow me to use this rock for a horse-block. My left arm is not quite able to bear much weight at present." And then, with a significant smile, as she looked at Roland,

"This is one of the mysteries to be yet explained."

"Miss Julia has told me about it," said Bradford. "The scoundrel, I hope, will get his deserts."

"This noble horse," said Mary, "I think has fully retaliated for that, although he did it in anticipation. Mr. Roland, I must refer you to Mr. Bradford, as you have me. I did not intend to have this part of the story known, but since it is out, you ought to know the true state of the case."

CHAPTER VII.

MR. SANDFORD, as we have seen, had been induced to engage with Mr. Norseworthy in his milling business, and, strange to say, he had been so unwise as to give his note for the amount which was to entitle him to one-fourth of the mill and dam, and also one-fourth of the profits. He did not mind giving the note, because he knew he had enough bills receivable that would be coming due in time to meet it, and furthermore, from Mr Norseworthy's statement, the profits would in all probability of themselves meet the demand. Now we must look into things a little, in order to see how it was that a person of the apparent good sense which Mr. Sandford seemed to possess should have so far departed from the plan he had laid out for the future. But Mr. Sandford had now tried his new way of life for some months, and he had begun to find that, after all, he had not quite escaped vexation and care. Some of the men he had hired proved unfaithful—they were mere eye-servants. And as Mr. Sandford did not work with them in the field, and could not be on hand to watch over them, as Mrs. Sandford was very fond of riding out over the beautiful country and making up picnics and pleasure parties, he found at the end of the season that the cost of his produce amounted to fully as much as it would possibly bring; so that, as far as profit was concerned, he might as well have purchased at once what he needed. There was likewise, he found, quite a sum of money absorbed in fencing and ditching, of which, for the present, he could see no return, except the hope that so much as had been done would not have to be done again, and some land which had been waste might in time be made available. But what troubled him a little about this was, that after calculating the cost of these improvements, he found that the price of these acres exceeded materially the average value of fertile fields.

There was another trouble that he had not anticipated in his estimate of the advantages of a farmer's life, and that had something to do with domestic arrangements. It was, to be sure, more particularly connected with Mrs. Sandford's part of the concern, and yet was more or less a business that he had to sympathize in.

They had brought with them two servants from the city—Betty, the cook, and a girl, or rather young woman, as nursery-maid and general upper-servant. Betty had been with them from the commencement of their house-keeping. She was a daughter of Erin—a whole-souled, faithful, and efficient person, not very tall nor stocky, quite trim in her make, and in general very trim in her appearance; a good, round, wholesome-looking face, with very black eyes, that gave token, from the manner in which light would flash from them at times, that there was combustible material beneath them that might, if ignited, make trouble for somebody. Mrs. Sandford, however, knew Betty well, and Betty knew her and loved her better, perhaps, than she did any living creature; for Betty had no relatives in this country, and none in her own that she seemed to take much interest in. She had come to Mrs. Sandford without any recommendation but her own honest look; and the mild and considerate treatment she had received from both the lady and her husband had won her heart to them, and Betty's heart was no whiffling thing. She was true and steadfast in her allegiance, and very respectful in her demeanour. Prudent in her outlay of money, she had accumulated quite a snug sum at the savings bank during the years she had lived in their family; and she seemed to feel that while she did her best to serve them, they in turn were helping her to a snug independence in case she should ever be unable to work. The relation between Betty and her employers had been so pleasant, that when the latter had concluded to move into the country, the only drawback to Mrs. Sandford's happiness was the fear that her faithful servant might not be willing to leave the city, where she had some acquaintances whom she seemed to like, and where she could enjoy the services of her own Church, for Betty was a good Catholic. And it was with an almost trembling heart that Mrs. Sandford at length made known to Betty their plan of leaving the city.

Betty listened attentively without uttering a word or by any sign manifesting her feelings, and it was a few moments after Mrs. Sandford ceased speaking before Betty found her tongue.

"And what fur should ye lave this nice house and all things

so convanient to your hand, and friends no far off, and your church and sich like? Are ye not as snug and well to do as a soul could crave?"

"Yes, that is true, Betty, so far as I am concerned; but Mr. Sandford has been in business now many years. He has to work hard. You know yourself, for many months in the year he is off early and home late. And often his mind is pressed with care and anxiety. He has to run great risks. He has no time to spend with his wife and children; and then the times change so much and so often, that what he makes one year he is in danger of losing the next."

"And where will he go, ma'am, that care and trouble and changes, and the like o' that, won't be following close till his heels? And sure, as for work, ma'am, it's my mind that work of some kind or anither is good for us all—the rich and the poor. It's doomed to it we are; and if he no finds that there's work and change and sore travail in the country as well, I'll lose my guess. Ah my leddie! isn't it in the country I've lived all my days till I came to America? It's work enough he'll find there."

Mrs. Sandford made no attempt to answer Betty. She felt it would be impossible to make her comprehend all the reasons which had induced herself and husband to desire a change, and she was now quite sure that her good servant was only bringing up the objections against their plan as a preliminary to her refusal to go with them. It was some time before Betty came to a stopping-place, and before she reached it, had enumerated such a catalogue of trials and difficulties, that if the good lady had not supposed Betty's imagination was more than usually in lively play, she would have felt a sad damper upon her anticipated pleasure. It was anything but a glowing picture, this living in the country, as Betty had painted it.

"Well, Betty, I am sorry you feel so about the country. I was in hopes to have you with me."

Betty spread her eyes and looked at her mistress in perfect astonishment, but said nothing.

"I know," continued Mrs. Sandford, "there are many reasons why you should be unwilling to leave the city. You have some friends here, and acquaintances, and your church is handy; but I shall part with you with regret, we have lived so long and pleasantly together."

"And what for, then, should we part now?"

"Not because I wish it, Betty."

"And did my leddy think it was for Betty I was speaking all the time? No, no, my leddy. Ye have been kind to me

and considerate, and Mr. Sandford is a true gentleman, and the childer trate me with respect, and I love the darlins. No, no, ma'am. Ye may not think it much to have the regard of sich as me; but until ye pit me from the door and bar it against me—which I know your good heart will never do—ye will no get rid of Betty. Go with you, ma'am! Isn't it to the ends of the earth I would go with you, and——"

But the big tears had started, and were rolling down Betty's round cheeks, and finally she broke down and sobbed aloud.

"Then my dear, good Betty, say no more. You shall never leave us." Mrs. Sandford would have said more, but her own feelings had become deeply excited, and her tears had started. She took Betty's hand.

"We understand each other now, Betty. You shall stay with us, and we will try to make everything as comfortable for you as we can."

"And what more can ye do than ye have done? My own mither never trated me as I've been trated here."

And Betty went with them into the country, and soon showed that her previous knowledge had not been lost. She could milk and make butter; and such butter! No farmer's family around could show any better, and most of them not so good. And well was it for the Sandfords that Betty was just what she was. But active and strong and willing as she was, Betty could not do everything, and more especially as she had a mortal aversion at seeing Mrs. Sandford do anything that she (Betty) thought properly belonged to a servant to do. The young woman they had taken with them from the city proved not much of a help, and very soon got homesick and left them; and Mrs. Sandford concluded to hire one from the country; and on inquiry, learned that some miles off a few poor families were living, whose daughters went out to do housework. Mr. Sandford, accompanied by his lady, therefore took advantage of a pleasant morning, and rode off to hunt up a servant, or, according to country phrase, to "hire help."

It was a delightful ride for Mrs. Sandford, as the road led quite into the mountains—a wild, desolate region, but to her romantic mind, very engaging. To Mr. Sandford, however, who had sympathy for his horse, and some little misgivings as to the strength of his carriage-springs, the road seemed not only very rough and stony, but very long. He, however, did his best to sympathize in the exclamations of delight which came from his lovely wife as they passed sparkling rivulets and deep, dark gorges in the hills, and immense

strata of rocks rising far above them, and apparently ready to topple over with the weight of the trees that leaned fearfully from its summit.

The little settlement was at length reached. It consisted of some half-dozen houses—a few of them mere shanties—scattered along the slope of a mountain, and near its base, at distances of from a quarter to half a mile. A small patch of cleared land surrounded each tenement, not large enough, however, to convey the idea that the family drew its subsistence from any such source; and from the smoke visible upon spots which, at a distance, appeared to have been cleared of the wood, it was evident that this was a charcoal region. The first house they drove up at was as promising as any, and was, in fact, the first they came to; and had Mr. Sandford previously any doubts as to what was the business carried on here they must have been at once cleared up. An old rickety wagon stood on the side of the road opposite the house, with high sides, sloping outward to a considerable angle, and black as Erebus. Tokens, too, were visible on the fence in front of the house; garments were hanging there, probably to dry, having been rained upon, or otherwise exposed to water, that seemed beyond the power of soapsuds to whiten.

As Mr. Sandford entered the little gate—Mrs. Sandford preferring to remain in the carriage until he ascertained what probability there was that the article in question could be obtained there—an elderly woman appeared at the front door, with a girl behind, looking over her shoulder; and when Mr. Sandford came up to her she made no attempt to move back, seeming to think the safest way for her, and perhaps the most agreeable to the gentleman, would be to hold the parley, whatever it might be about, in the open air.

"Good morning, madam."

There was no reply, except by a slight inclination of the head.

"Is this Mrs. Beal?"

"My name is Beal."

"We were informed that your daughters at times went out to service, and as my wife—Sandford is the name——"

"Sandford!" breaking in quite suddenly; "from New York city, is it not?"

"Yes, madam."

"And you're wanting help. Is that your woman in the carriage?"

"That is Mrs. Sandford, madam."

"Well, so I thought. I've heerd on her as a likely kind a

person. P'raps she'd like to speak to Matilda Jane herself. Men don't in general know about sich things. Yes, we've got one to home, and here she is"—turning round in order, no doubt, to exhibit the article, but no Matilda Jane was there. She had taken herself off so soon as she heard the business which had brought the gentleman and lady to their door, no doubt to fix up a little; for, when at her mother's call, she again appeared, a blue ribbon was hanging from her neck, and a very high comb graced the top of her head.

By the time Mrs. Sandford reached the door Miss Matilda Jane was seen standing in the back part of the room, apparently busy folding up some article of dress, pressing it hard with her hands on the table, but looking very earnestly towards the strange lady, who, being invited, had entered the room.

"I don't know as you'll feel like sittin' down here, for we're all helter skelter this mornin'. Beal hasn't but just gone off to the woods. He didn't get to bed till most morning, for he had to watch the coal-pit, as the folks with him an't over partickler, and ye see the breakfast things is round yet. Take this cheer, mam—this is my cheer. I keeps one cheer for myself; for the men folks is so smutted up, that they smut the cheers and everything; take this cheer, mam."

Mrs. Sandford took the chair, rather against her sense of cleanliness though; for although the article itself had a fair, clean, glossy look, yet she would have preferred standing as an easier way to keep the nether portion of her garments from contact with the floor; the look of that was not inviting. As soon as the lady had been seated, Mrs. Beal took her station by the side of the fireplace, and leaning one hand on the low shelf, pressed the other against her side, with her arm akimbo.

"Yes, mam, as I telled the gentleman, we have one darter to home, and only one; she is the youngest though; that's the one"—pointing towards Miss Matilda Jane, who pressed harder than ever on the table, and seemed very energetic in what she was doing. "Do look up, Matilda Jane, and let the lady see how you look. I think a person—girls or boys, men or women—show a good deal what's in 'em by their looks. I tell Beal often that such a fellow he's hired an't good for nothing, just by one look at 'im. But he's so easy natured like. He kind a thinks well of most every one, but gits dreadfully took in sometimes. Yes, my gals have all got what I call good places. Matilda Jane has been out a little. She was at the Coles's awhile, a helpin' them during hayin'; and then she was a spell at Uncle Zeke's. I don't know as you

know Uncle Zeke Potter. We call him Uncle Zeke, but he's no kin of ourn; but he's a clever, good-hearted man, and so is his wife, and so is his darter. I mean the one that was married, but unfortunate in her husband. He—well, he didn't behave no wise well; and so Uncle Zeke, he heerd on it, but not from his darter. 'No,' she said to me many times since she's been to home, 'Baggs can never say I told on him;' and she didn't. But I think she had ought to. Women sometimes keep their trials in their own bosoms, and it wears on 'em. Now, that an't my way. Beal says sometimes to me, I believe you talk just to ease yourself. And so I do. There an't no use in smotherin' things up. But Matilda Jane is like her dad, for that she is no hand to talk. Have you babies, mam?"

"Not very young ones—the youngest is three years old."

"Oh! well, then, that's clever; and did you want her to see to the children, and sich like?"

"Occasionally. I want her principally for a housemaid. We have a good cook."

"Oh! well that's clever. Matilda Jane an't much used to do cooking; though Uncle Zeke Potter says she can git up a meal as good as *he* wants to eat."

But we will not tire the reader by giving all the questions and answers which had to be gone through with; suffice it to say, a bargain was made, and Matilda Jane was to be at Mr. Sandford's the next day.

This peep into a certain phase of country living and talking was something new to Mr. Sandford, and his lady, too. It did, indeed, afford them considerable amusement, and helped to divert their attention from the roughness of the road on their way home; and yet it threw a slight shade over both their minds, and especially tended to cool the ardour of the lady, and dampen her romantic zeal. There was a shady side to country life as well as to that of a crowded city.

The next morning, after the arrival of their new servant, Mr. and Mrs. Sandford were attracted by an unusual disturbance in the kitchen. They had just sat down to breakfast, and as the door from their eating-room opened into the kitchen, any unusual disturbance in the latter was easily noticed. Mrs. Sandford immediately arose, and as she passed through the door closed it behind her. The first sight alarmed her; for there was Betty, her face redder than any rose, her eyes flashing fire, and her hands fast gripped to the two arms of Matilda Jane from behind, the latter struggling to free herself; and thus they were whirling round at a lively rate.

"Betty! Betty!" said Mrs. Sandford, in great alarm, "what *is* the matter, Betty?"

Betty immediately relinquished her hold of the damsel, whose cheeks were as red and her eyes as full of fire as her own.

"The matter! It's matter enough, my leddy. Do you think the like o' her setting up her mind to go and sit down at the very table with the master and mistress? You see, my leddy, I mistrusted the like when I saw how she had setted the table the morn. Ses I, "You have put on two plates too many.'

"'No, I haven't, then,' said she.

"'Yes, you have,' says I. Here is seven plates, and five is all that's needed—the master and mistress, and Mrs. Herbert, and the two childer.'

"'Well,' says she, 'you and me makes two more.' Did ever hear the like o' that, my leddy?" and Betty rolled her eyes up toward the ceiling, as though horror-stricken. "But I whipped the plates off in a jiffy. Eating with the master and mistress, indeed—a pretty how do do! But I see she was bent upon the thing; so, when she had carried in the food, etc., away she turns to the glass, a fixing and prinking. 'What's that for?' says I. 'I'm going to breakfast,' says she. 'No, you don't,' says I. 'Try it at your peril,' and away she starts; and believe me, Mrs. Sandford, it was as much as my strength could do to hould her still."

Mrs. Sandford at once understood the case, and moreover saw clearly, from the sullen countenance of Miss Matilda Jane, that very likely Mr. Sandford and herself would be obliged to take another romantic ride, in some direction or other, for "more help." And so it proved. Miss Matilda Jane was so indignant at the insult she had received in not being permitted to eat with the master and mistress, that she bundled up her goods that very morning, and took French leave. And Mr. and Mrs. Sandford had the pleasure of making several excursions before such an one as they needed could be procured.

These were petty annoyances, and might have been borne as matters too trifling to make account of, but when added to others of a more serious nature, they partook of the character of discomfort.

The summer and autumn, with all their beauties and pleasant scenes, had passed away, and the wintry months had come. Unused to country wants, and the necessity of making provision against that portion of the year when rough roads and cold storms make going abroad a serious matter, Mr.

Sandford was often obliged to venture out on rides by no means exhilarating. To be sure, his cheerful wife and a good fire awaited him on his return; and the contrast between the bright home and the discomfort of the ride was keenly felt, and, for the time, richly enjoyed; and if there had been nothing besides the physical inconveniences to which occasionally he was exposed, no doubt he would, in time, have learned to bear them without much thought, or taken such precautions in the proper season as would prevent the necessity of going abroad when the weather or the roads were not propitious.

But there had been gathering over the fortunes of Mr. Sandford a dark atmosphere. It proceeded at first from a cloud no bigger than a man's hand; but it soon enlarged, and had begun already to cover the heavens. His sun was obscured, the beautiful scenery about him lost its charm, the business of his farm was beginning to lose its romance, the lowing of the cattle sounded no longer musical to his ear. A dull reality tinctured both the house, the farm, the workmen, and the heart; indeed, even his lovely wife, and the dear little ones that clambered on his knees around the evening fireside, although dear to him as ever, could hardly awaken any emotions of joy. To them he endeavoured to put on an aspect of cheer, and even the keen eye of love was for a while deceived; and when his watchful wife thought she perceived a change; that his step was more heavy and his demeanour unusually staid; and that marks of care at times spread over his fair, open brow, she supposed it to be only caused by the petty annoyances of their new state of life, and that, as he became more accustomed to country ways, they would cease to trouble him.

There was one item, however, that had begun to excite her curiosity, and that was the frequency with which her husband had to visit the neighbouring town. To be sure there were often articles of clothing or necessaries for the house wanted which could be procured there on better terms and of better quality than the single store at Woodburn afforded; yet when she would say, as she heard him give orders for his horse and gig:

"Surely, husband dear, you will not venture far to-day; it is surely going to storm!"

"I think not, my dear. Anything I can get for you to-day at Hopewell?"

"You are surely not going all that distance to-day!"

"Oh! yes; I have some little business to do there, and I may as well go to-day as any time."

Mrs. Sandford had been so long accustomed to leave all business matters in the hands of her husband, that in reality she did not think, when he spoke of "a little business that he had to see to," that there was anything strange about it; nor did it, for a long while, enter her mind even to ask herself the question, "What can my husband have to do with business? He has left business."

But Mr. Sandford had not left business—or business had not left him. And in order to understand his present situation, the reader must have patience with a little explanation.

It will be remembered that when Mr. Sandford left the city and purchased his farm, the principal part of his capital—upon the interest of which he expected to depend for the purchase of luxuries which his judgment told him could not be afforded from the products of a farm—consisted of good indorsed notes. From his land he expected his living—his milk and butter and eggs and grain, his beef and pork, and, perhaps, enough to sell with which to purchase groceries, etc. His interest money would be so much above his mere necessaries, which he could expend for the gratification of his taste, and to indulge the moderate desires of his wife. And thus calculating, he felt quite at ease. He owed no man anything, and his mind, relieved from all that anxiety which more or less attends mercantile affairs, was buoyant and happy. He did, indeed, feel, as he said, like a boy enjoying a holiday, with this addition, that it was to be a holiday for the remainder of his life. Mr. Sandford had no desire to be rich, which may have been all true; it is very possible that, considering the wear and tear of mind generally needful in attaining that desideratum, he was justified in renouncing the struggle for wealth; but he left out of the account that wealth is a mighty power, and if its attainment be pursued in an honourable path, and with motives higher than those of mere sordid lust, its acquisition is worth all the pains and labour. Its possessor stands on high vantage-ground; his soul, if of the noble, generous stamp, can feast on deeds of kindness; every day some struggling brother may be lifted from the mire of despair, and, filled with hope, go on his way rejoicing; he can dry the widow's tears, and take the orphan by the hand, and, giving him a fair start on the battle-field of life, bid him go in and win and be a man. Wealth, too, is the handmaid of refinement; it gives the soul of its possessor a larger room for the development of its higher powers; it gives time and means for intellectual culture; and it enables him to free his spirit from those little worrying cares which, like thorns

in the flesh, distract and torment and cramp the needy and straitened.

Mr. Sandford, however, had confined his idea of happiness within a narrow circle: *freedom from care, domestic comfort in the society of his wife and children, a life amid the beauties of nature, quiet and rest*—these were the objects which to him seemed all-sufficient—these were to constitute his paradise here. It is not for us, in any particular case, to judge for what reason divine Providence disappoints expectations and breaks up plans of happiness. All we know about such matters is learned from what we see and know as general results. And from these we can venture to judge that it is not the design of God that man should *burrow*, at least so long as his energies are unstrung. When "the grasshopper becomes a burden," he may, if in his power, lay off the load he has been accustomed to bear. "When he is afraid of that which is high," he may then step carefully, on the shore of time; and, his work being done, contemplate with holy peace his departure on that distant voyage over that wide, wide sea. For He has said it who know's man's character and destiny, "*We must work while the day lasts!*"

Mr. Sandford found, as has been said already, that so far were the receipts from his farm from supplying the wants of his family, that he might better have let his land lie idle and purchase what few things his family needed that the farm produced; in fact, he found the draft upon his purse, for wages and extras of different kinds, exceeded the value of all the crops gathered into his barns. This he would not have cared for, as he had supposed for the first year he must calculate on considerable outlay, if unfortunately the amount expended had not so nearly drained his purse.

A man with an empty purse in a new place, and among strangers, is in general to be pitied; and especially if surrounded by a community where money is not circulating freely. And, perhaps, it was this fact as much as anything that led to the first injudicious step in Mr. Sandford's case.

It is hardly worth while to go into particulars as to the how and when of Mr. Norseworthy's introduction to Mr. Sandford. Mr. Norseworthy was proverbial for being everywhere and knowing everything. Perhaps he met Mr. Sandford on the road, and stopped to welcome the stranger gentleman to "our town." It was just like Mr. Norseworthy to do so; he could introduce himself any time without the aid of a third party. Suffice it that he did somehow get acquainted with Mr. Sand-

ford, and that gentleman soon formed quite a high opinion of Mr. Norseworthy's administrative abilities. That gentleman, too, had given Mr. Sandford very valuable advice in reference to ditching. Mr. Norseworthy had experience in such matters, and also in the management of the sons of Erin; he had employed them in his limestone quarry, and knew all about them. And then, as Woodburn was such a dull, still place, Mr. Norseworthy would insist upon taking Mr. Sandford to see his works—his limestone quarry and his cotton-waste mill.

"I don't know," said Mr. Norseworthy, "how some people stand it, to stay at home and plod round in a half-bushel. I can't do it. Some say to me, 'Norseworthy, an't you afraid of having too many irons in the fire?' 'No,' says I, 'no, I an't afraid; the more you have in the better, only keep a good watch of them.'"

That Mr. Norseworthy did all this out of kind and generous feelings, it might not be safe to aver; the result, however, of his intimacy with Mr. Sandford was, in the first place, that Mr. Sandford having occasion for some money a few weeks before his receipts would be coming in, Mr. Norseworthy procured it for him, "just as easy as turn over your hand."

"And now, Sandford"—Mr. Norseworthy had that free and easy way with him, he made himself familiar wherever he could get a footing that would hold a cat—"now, Sandford, whenever you want anything in this way, just let me know."

And from this beginning arose an intimacy that has gone from step to step. Mr. Sandford owns a quarter in the waste-cotton mill; Mr. Sandford's name is on Mr. Norseworthy's notes at the Hopewell Bank; and more than all, Mr. Sandford's notes and name are in the hands of a man who is known far and wide, who has thrown the meshes of his net over individuals in many adjacent towns; he has loaned them money and he holds their bonds, and his name is feared; for he is said to be implacable if his debt is not paid to the last farthing.

Now this Shylock was most plausible in manners, and with more than common shrewdness in judging the characters of those he trusted, and he well knew that the simple name of some men was as good without the security of what property their name represented, as if deeded to him. He had faith in Mr. Sandford and loaned him freely, knowing that there was not only honesty of principle, but that pride of character which would impel its possessor to strain every nerve rather than be a delinquent. He asked no security, but he kept an eye upon the records at the town clerk's office; and though an

utterly indifferent listener when the name of Sandford was conversed about in little knots gathered in taverns or elsewhere, he treasured up all he heard. Sly, cunning, grasping, and with no heart, a vampire of insatiable greed was Jonas Tigh.

Mrs. Sandford was one day called from her nursery to see a gentleman who was waiting for her in the parlour.

"Do you know the gentleman's name, Betty?"

"He's a stranger to me, mam; but he's a dapper-looking person and pleasant spoken. He asked, Is Mr. Sandford in? I tould him nay, he was not; and then he says, Is his leddy at home? She is, says I; will you please to walk in and be sated till I call her?"

"Did he give his name, Betty?"

"Indeed, mam, I niver axed him; but I can do that in a jiffy," and Betty started on her way.

"No, no, Betty, no matter now; I will go down, and see him."

As Mrs. Sandford entered the parlour, she was somewhat struck with the appearance of the gentleman who rose from his chair to make his obeisance; he was tall and slender, dressed in rather a peculiar style; for, although the quality of his garments was good, the make of them belonged to a fashion that had passed away; and the thought at once occurred to her, this is some country farmer who has put on his best suit, which, from its being seldom used, has lasted beyond its day. The coat was of blue, with brass buttons, almost as bright as new; a buff vest, quite short-waisted to match that of the coat, which was very long in the skirt, but with very short lapels; his trousers of drab a little loose, but wanting in length; and his boots had very square toes.

His countenance at the first glance presented a serious and somewhat sharp aspect; his eye cold and keen; his cheeks a little sunken; his eyebrows thick and sprinkled with gray; his hair iron-gray, and plenty of it. As he bowed to the hostess, there was an attempt to ape the gentleman; but she saw clearly that it was a ceremony with which he was not familiar, and the effort did not raise him in her estimation.

His first words were:

"Is this Mrs. Sandford?"

"Yes, sir; Mr. Sandford is not at home, and my servant said you asked for me."

"I did, madam. I have never had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Sandford's lady before, although your good husband has frequently been at my house. My name is Tigh; you no doubt have heard him mention the name. You have the

advantage of your husband, Mrs. Sandford, in point of years; you must be much younger than he."

"I *am* some years younger than Mr. Sandford. Tigh did you say was the name?"

"Yes, madam, Tigh. I think you must have heard of Jonas Tigh. I am pretty well known in these parts."

"I cannot indeed say, sir, that I have ever heard the name before. Do you reside in Woodburn?"

"Oh! no, madam, I live on the outer edge of Hopewell. Then your husband has never mentioned about his being at my house? I almost wonder at that!"

"By no means strange, sir; you may probably know that he was brought up in New York, and merchants there seldom trouble their wives with business matters, or the names of those with whom they are intimate in their business relations."

"Ah! indeed!" and Mr. Tigh looked away from the lady, and bent his eye upon the sparkling fire, and sat for a little while musing perhaps upon this revelation, or thinking what he should say next.

For some reason Mrs. Sandford did not fancy her visitor, and was about to ask him whether he had any business with Mr. Sandford, when Eva Herbert, who had been calling upon her sisters at the Bradford house, entered the street-door, and came into the parlour. Seeing a stranger there, she was about to retire, when Mrs. Sandford said:

"How are the girls? Stop and tell me about them. All well?"

"Oh! yes; and they are coming over this evening. They have some strange news to tell you."

"To tell me?"

"Yes; for it is about somebody you are much interested for. O dear! this is a strange world!" and so saying, Eva left the room.

Mrs. Sandford noticed that the keen eye of her visitor was intently fixed upon Eva during the time she stood there. She did not introduce the lady to him, for she did not feel like doing anything that might give him reason to feel that his presence was of any consequence. She wanted to get rid of him.

"What a very sprightly countenance that young lady has. I don't know when I have seen so comely a person; is that a sister of yours?"

"Oh! no, sir."

"She is visiting, perhaps?"

"She lives with us at present."

"Oh! ay, indeed." And again the gentleman looks thoughtfully toward the fire.

Mrs. Sandford was getting tired.

"It may be some time, sir, before Mr. Sandford returns Can you leave the errand you may have to him with me?"

The gentleman looked at her a moment as though scanning her thoughts; he read them perfectly; he knew she was impatient to have him go; but he had no idea of going.

"Mr. Sandford, I know, will be anxious to see me this evening. I suppose he is at present attending to some business at Mr. Norseworthy's. I called there, and finding how he was occupied, left word that he would find me at his own house. I think, as it will be greatly for his interest to see me, if you are willing, madam, I had better await his return."

"By all means, sir; please make yourself at home. You will excuse my absence for a short time."

"Certainly, madam."

"Who is that you have in the parlour?" said Eva, as Mrs. Sandford entered the nursery.

"I can only tell you that his name is Tigh—an old specimen he seems to me."

"What does he want?"

"He is waiting to see Mr. Sandford; but what business my husband can have with him I cannot imagine. I begin to feel worried, dear Eva. Have you not noticed of late how careworn Mr. Sandford appears at times?"

"Oh! yes; and I have wondered that you have not seemed to notice it. You remember when you first moved here how very happy he was, how he seemed to enjoy the scenery and all the variety of a country life; perhaps he misses the excitement of the city now that the novelty of the change has worn off."

"Oh! no, I fear there is something deeper than that: the fact is, Eva, I have no opinion of that Mr. Norseworthy. I think he is a harum-scarum sort of a man, full of plans, but without judgment. Oh! dear, I sometimes wish we had never left the city."

"I cannot join you in that wish," and Eva looked archly at her, and smiled.

"Yes, to be sure, if we had not come, you might not have come at that time, and you and William might not have met. Well, I will hope for the best. It did at the time seem best that we should come. But look, yonder is Donald Roland! I wonder if he is coming here; yes, he has stopped at the gate. I must run down and take him into the dining-room.

I don't wish him to see that outlandish man," and so saying, Mrs. Sandford hastened from the room, saying as she was closing the door: "Come down soon, Eva."

"Whom have you as a visitor?" said Donald, as he entered the dining-room. "I see an old-fashioned gig at the door."

"And an old-fashioned man has come in it—a Mr. Tigh; do you know him?"

"I know there is such a man. Is Mr. Sandford with him?"

"Mr. Sandford is not at home."

"Do you know what he wants?"

"He wishes to see my husband on business of some kind."

Mrs. Sandford noticed, as soon as she mentioned the name of her visitor, that the face of her friend flushed, and that his countenance, losing its bright, pleasant aspect, assumed its most serious cast.

"You say you know this Mr. Tigh."

"I do not know him personally; but I think I know the character of the man; he is very singular."

"What is his business, a farmer?"

"Oh! no, he is a man who has accumulated considerable property; at least such is the general belief. Has he ever been here before?"

"Never; but he says Mr. Sandford has often been at his house."

Donald was silent for a few moments, and then looking up with much feeling depicted on his countenance,

"You remember the evening when you announced to me the wish that I would look upon you as a sister?"

"I do; and have I not since endeavoured to take the place of one?"

"You have most truly; and now I feel that the time has come when I must take the place of a brother. Come in, Eva." Eva had opened the door, but perceiving how very serious the face of her friend appeared, supposed there was some communication being made by Donald of a private nature. Eva had her suspicions aroused by the fact of this Mr. Tigh being there; peculiar circumstances had made her of late more conversant with business matters than was her friend Mrs. Sandford. "Come in, Eva, there is nothing that concerns either of us that you may not know." Eva came up and took a seat next Mrs. Sandford, and immediately opposite to Donald, at the same time taking the hand of Mrs. S.

"I was just saying to our dear friend here, that the time has

come when I feel it my duty to act my part in our friendly relations to each other. She has indeed been a sister to me in faithful dealing and affectionate interest; and now as a brother I wish to deal plainly and truly with her. The presence of this Mr. Tigh in your house fills me with alarm, and has strengthened my purpose in calling this afternoon; for I have come to have, if possible, a kind, brotherly talk with Mr. Sandford and yourself; for when I see such friends as you all are, in danger, I cannot keep silence."

"O dear friend, dear brother! tell me, tell me what is it?" and Mrs. Sandford in her earnestness clasped his arm.

"I fear Mr. Sandford has involved himself in difficulty, and unwittingly placed himself in the power of this man. Now it is not necessary for me to enter into particulars; but this much I wish to say to you both—use your influence to induce Mr. Sandford to go no further; beg him to pause where he is; tell him if he has not yet thrown himself into the power of that man, to stop all intercourse with him; he is a plausible, designing man, with no delicacy of feeling, no heart, and I fear no principle."

"But why not speak to Mr. Sandford yourself?" said Eva; "he would be more likely to listen to your advice than to ours. Men, you know, think women know but little of business matters."

"Mr. Sandford has never communicated to me anything concerning his business matters. You know there is a great difference in our ages; and, more than that, he knows that I am but little conversant with business; but there are some things perhaps, from my position here, which I have an opportunity of learning about some persons with whom I think he has unfortunately become intimate, which he does not know; it might annoy him should I attempt to caution him against them; for men, you must realize, do not in general like to have their discernment called in question."

"What is your opinion of Mr. Norseworthy?" said Eva. She was the principal speaker. Mrs. Sandford was too intensely occupied in thought even to attend to much that Donald was saying. She had become deeply alarmed by the first part of his communication, and was running over in her mind all the little circumstances that had of late aroused her fears.

"Do you think," continued Eva, "that he is an honest man?"

"I should not like to say that I thought Mr. Norseworthy dishonest; but I look upon him as a visionary; he is very sanguine about his plans, and while he may not design evil,

yet there is great danger in any connection with him, from the fact that he seems reckless of consequences. In fact, what I fear is this; Mr. Sandford is a man of strict integrity; he has a fine sense of honour; he is unsuspicious; he will hold to his word as truly as to a written obligation. Some with whom he appears to have business relations in this place, know this, and will not scruple to take advantage of it; and if anything can be done to induce him to drop all connection with them, it may save him from serious trouble."

"Why not, then," said Eva, "let me mention the matter to Dr. Ransom, and get him to speak to Mr. Sandford; he thinks so highly of the Doctor, not only as a minister, but as a man of sound judgment, and they are so very intimate, he might take advice more readily from him than from any one else."

"I believe he would," said Mrs. Sandford, taking Eva round the neck and kissing her; "what a dear, good friend you are, Eva!"

"I hope you will never want for friends, Mrs. Sandford. I think you never will," said Roland.

"No," said Eva; "your generous heart will never want for sympathy and love, or the world is a great deal worse than I think it is."

"In regard to the interference of Dr. Ransom, which Mrs. Herbert——"

"Please, don't," said Eva.

"Well, which Eva has suggested, it might have a good effect, if he can be induced to undertake it."

"I know he will, if I ask him; he is a dear, good soul—a father to us all."

"I only wish we were all worthy to be his children," said Donald.

"Worthy or not," replied Mrs. Sandford, "I believe he loves us all, and you, Donald, in particular."

Donald did not reply. His feelings toward the Doctor were of the most tender nature, and almost the very mention of his name stirred his heart. He did not reply, for he could not just then without manifesting more emotion than he cared to reveal.

"What is it, Betty? come in."

Betty came in. She had opened the door, and expecting only to see Mrs. Sandford, was about to retire; but obeying the word of "the mistress," she entered, and closed the door.

"What is the matter, Betty?" Betty was quite red in the face, and evidently had been disturbed.

"Well, indeed, mam, I could wish to know what to do about the gentleman as called here to see Mr. Sandford."

"Is he not sitting in the parlour?"

"Bless your soul, mam, he's been in the kitchen this half-hour, axing me questions about this, that, and t'other thing, and about the family, and about the young leddy there, and whether she were thought to be rich, and how many servants my leddy kept, and whether she worked herself, and how many men the master hired, and if he ever wrought with his own hands; indeed, mam, a judge in the court could na have questioned me closer had I been on trial for my life."

"And did you answer his questions, Betty?"

"Only after a sort, mam; for I judged he was no gintleman that would come where he was not axed, and peering into things that did not consarn him—it's small satisfaction he got from me, I assure you, mam; but what to do with the crittur is beyond me to know, mam; for he sits with his feet sprawled out afore the fire; and how to go on wid my work I know not, and the supper-time drawin' nigh. Blest be praised! there he goes." And Betty started off much more speedily than she came in.

"How provoking it is!" said Mrs. Sandford. "Yes, there he goes towards the barn; no doubt to question Patrick. What kind of man can he be?"

"Not such an one, I think, with whom either you or Mr. Sandford would care to be intimate. You had better, perhaps, on the present occasion, treat him hospitably, and smother your feelings as well as you can. When our hand is in the lion's mouth, it is not best to irritate him."

"I will try to do my best; but must you go? I don't know why it is, but just now I feel as if I wanted all my friends around me."

"Your friends, I think, will not be long absent from your side whenever they can be of real service."

"Thank you! thank you! May God bless you and keep you from every heartache."

"I dare not make such a petition for myself; for I am beginning to see that I am not the best judge of what is really for my happiness."

Mrs. Sandford and Eva both looked at him with amazement, and yet with an interest that almost brought tears from them both; it was the first token from his own lips which they had heard that seemed like the working of a divine power.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Sandford, "how glad I am to hear you thus speak."

"It is one thing to be convinced that we are in a dark and misty path; but it is a very different thing to know how we are to find our way out of it."

"But have you not just said that you feel conscious of the need of divine help?"

Donald was silent a moment. He was deeply agitated. He knew how much interest they both felt for his best good; and overcoming, for the moment, that pride of heart which had so long mastered him, and caused him to keep from letting out his true feelings, he said, but with a tremulous voice:

"I do need it. Will you ask it for me?"

"Will we?" said Mrs. Sandford, taking his hand and looking up to him, while the tears rolled down her glowing cheek. "Will we? Have we not, with all the earnestness of sisterly love, prayed for you, night and day?"

It was more than Roland could do to command his feelings. The countenance of that lovely woman beaming with emotion; while Eva, equally affected, was leaning, with covered face, upon her shoulder—both before him, manifesting how much his welfare was at heart. He made no reply, not even wishing them adieu, but stepped quickly from the room, mounted his horse, and rode away.

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. PEABODY, Roland's aunt, had, for many years, looked with an evil eye on her nephew. He was born after his parents had been married ten years, and both they and their kindred had given up all expectations of their having an heir. Mrs. Peabody was Mr. Roland's only sister. She had, at her marriage, a handsome property for a lady; but her husband was reckless, and soon squandered what she brought him. They had three children—two sons and a daughter, the latter born a few years after her cousin Donald. Previous to the death of Mr. Peabody, their eldest son, being quite a favourite of his uncle, was almost constantly at Roland Place; and there was little doubt in the mind of his parents that the inheritance of their wealthy brother would descend to him. This hope, however, was destroyed by the birth of Donald. Mrs. Peabody losing her husband, and being dependent, was invited by her brother, at the death of his wife, to make his house her home. Her elder son was sent to the city to learn business, while James, the younger son, remained at his uncle's, a companion for Donald. The two boys, however, were so different in disposition and taste that there was little fellowship between them. Donald was retired, fond of reading, of a nervous, bashful temperament, not well understood by his schoolmates, and perhaps not generally liked by them. James, his cousin, was fond of low sport; a dull scholar—associating by choice with the lower class of the community—and so little disposed for improvement, that, by the advice of his uncle, his mother placed him with a farmer of good repute, in order that he might be under discipline, and be learning how to manage a farm, which she had no doubt his uncle would give him when he became of age. Old Mr. Roland died without a will, although it was

said that a will had been made by him before the birth of Donald, leaving all his estate that consisted of lands in Woodburn and fast property in the city of New York, to the oldest son of his brother, who was living in Virginia—his English notions in regard to property still remaining unchanged by the Revolution. To his sister, it was said, he bequeathed an annuity, chargeable to the estate, of two thousand dollars. It is most likely that such a will was made; but, of course, no one doubted that at Donald's birth it was destroyed. At his death no will of any kind could be found. The estate was, therefore, administered upon as intestate, and Donald, of course, entered upon it as sole owner.

Many, at first, pitied Mrs. Peabody, and wondered that her brother could have allowed her to be left dependent on a nephew; but when they found that she was continued by Donald at the head of the establishment, and that he had placed James on one of his finest farms, and, no doubt, intended to give it to him if he behaved himself—he having, by many foolish freaks, obtained a character of rather dubious stamp—all talk about the matter ceased, and especially when a rumour began to move round, although in a very still undertone, that Donald was engaged to his cousin, Cornelia Peabody. How this rumour was started nobody could tell, and the few that really knew Donald and the lady, too, had no faith in it.

Mrs. Peabody managed well for Donald, and, until the *emeute* on her part, in reference to this engagement, all had gone on smoothly enough. It may well be conceived that after the scene which has been described in a previous chapter, it could neither be agreeable to Donald, nor his aunt and cousin, to mingle as they had done as one family. He, therefore, made her the offer, either to retain the apartments she and Cornelia already occupied, which were in a large wing of the house, and be served by the attendants of the house as formerly, or take possession of a house near by, belonging to him, and which he offered to fit up in a proper manner for her reception. He had already settled a moderate annuity upon her, enough to support herself and daughter comfortably.

"And who is to take the oversight of your house?" she asked.

"I will make provision for that, aunt; you need give yourself no further trouble on that account."

"And how do you suppose I shall feel," she replied, "who have so long been mistress here, to see another in my place?"

"For that reason, aunt, I offer you a place where you will not be subject to such an annoyance. You have your choice."

After thinking a few instants, she replied:

"Well, I should prefer to leave the house, then."

Roland was pleased, but somewhat surprised, that a few days should have made such a change in her views and feelings; for there was no manifestation of passion—she seemed rather sad than angry; and Donald, who really loved her, most sincerely regretted that she had made this separation necessary.

But Mrs. Peabody was not changed in her views or feelings, as Donald imagined. She had a deep-laid plan in progress, and she believed it could be better accomplished away from the house than in it. We must bear in mind, as we enter into the secret machinations of this lady, that she had been nurturing a feeling of jealousy over not only this nephew, who had come in the way of what she had brought herself to look upon as *her* inheritance: for she had no doubt that her brother, if without a child of his own, would either make her or one of her children heir to his estate; for she knew that the two brothers had no love for each other. And when she once heard incidentally that a will had been made in favour of their nephew in Virginia, she placed no reliance whatever upon it. Her brother had always told her, likewise, to give herself no uneasiness about herself and her children; she would always have a home there, and the boys he would see to if they behaved themselves.

But when Roland was born she saw that the prospect of inheriting Roland Place was gone; and it may be said, that she watched with more interest than even his parents did, through all his childhood and youth, the result of every casual sickness he suffered, hoping it might be his last. This may sound hard, and charged as it is, too, upon that sex from which we look for the exhibition of all the more tender and unselfish feelings; but there is no safety for us so long as even one evil passion is cherished in the heart of man or woman; it grows by nurture, gaining power day by day and year by year—strengthening with our strength, and increasing in virulence as our age goes on, until the ripened fruit bears all the marks of hell, from whence the seed originated. And perhaps no passion shows more distinctly from whence it had its source than the lust of gain. It has an evil eye, for ever peering forth to watch its chance and gain its end; it steels the heart, it indurates the conscience, it shuts up every avenue by which a kindly influence might enter; and when its power

has attained maturity its wretched subject stands forth a human brute.

When Donald had attained to manhood, and was in possession of that which she had so long coveted, a hope sprung up, which she believed might realize to her all she had been desiring. Cornelia had reached her eighteenth year; she was good-looking, and, no doubt, in her mother's eye, quite handsome. Donald and she were together in the same house; they sat at the same table; they were intimate, as two cousins of different sex under the same roof would naturally be, perhaps, with this deduction, that Donald spent the greater part of his time in his own private room. Some efforts were made by Mrs. Peabody to induce Cornelia to read and attend to music; for Donald she knew was a great reader, and especially fond of music. But Cornelia had no real fondness for learning of any kind. Her mind was of the commonplace order. And even the efforts which Donald, out of kindness, made to help her along, were, in a great measure, fruitless. The young lady, most likely, misconstrued these efforts on the part of her cousin, and allowed herself to indulge the belief that he did it by the instigation of love. That she should become attached to him was very natural. He was handsome in person, intelligent, kind-hearted, polite, and of that somewhat reserved manner which, mingled with qualities of a genial nature, is apt to fascinate the female sex.

But Donald never, for a moment, indulged the least regard for his cousin beyond that natural interest which flowed from their connection as relatives.

Mrs. Peabody may or may not have believed that there was an engagement between them at the time of her attack upon Donald. She had at the time two strings to her bow. If successful in getting him to acknowledge an engagement, all would be well; if not, it would afford a plea for a breach in her relations with her nephew, which would accomplish, if not just what she desired, at least would gratify her hateful passions. If neither herself nor her children could gain a permanent hold of Roland Place, she would have the satisfaction of driving him from it. Strangers might have it, and welcome; but to see him, against whom she had always indulged an inward dislike, enjoying with another than her own child the luxuries of that home she had so long coveted; to see a lady, whom she believed he had already selected in preference to her daughter, ruling as mistress where *she* had so long held sway—was more than she could bear; and she resolved it should not be.

Jim Peabody had not been heard from since the time when

he had engaged with Starkey on that infamous attempt to kidnap Miss Herbert. Roland and Bradford had a violent contest with the two desperadoes, and had just succeeded in getting the mastery over them, when the Sheriff and his aid came up. Starkey was carried off; but Peabody, wresting himself from the grasp of Roland, drew a pistol and fired at the instant. His object, no doubt, was to take his cousin's life; but, as has already been said, the ball merely tore his wrist. The shock to Donald, however, for the moment prevented his laying hold of the villain, who, seeing Busby drive up, sprang on his horse and was off. No one in the town cared for his absence, and, indeed, many were but too glad that he had gone from the place. There is no doubt, however, that he held correspondence with his mother, and was ready to engage heartily in any plan that would bring down, as he had often boasted that he would yet do, "the proud young cock that strutted so lordly at Roland Place."

This chapter, however, must close here; it is merely thrown in as a parenthesis.

CHAPTER IX.

DEAR reader, did you ever engage heartily in any plan, either for raising your fellow-men out of a low condition, where a physical incubus had for a long time held them, if not in absolute want, yet with only the bare necessaries of existence? Or have you made efforts to impart intellectual culture and to excite a taste for refinement where you thought knowledge and taste were needed? If you have, you can realize how difficulties start up from unexpected sources—how suspicion wakes up and looks with eye askance, and jealousy, with scornful lip, turns her back, and self-interest works in secret to hinder every effort for good.

Donald Roland had accomplished his promise and erected the little building which Dr. Ransom thought was needed in that portion of his parish, and he had spared no necessary expense in fitting it in such a manner as would, he thought, gratify his reverend friend, and at the same time please the poor neighbourhood where it was located. But, for some reason quite inexplicable to the Doctor, after the first meeting held there, then there was quite a good attendance, the number was not, in general, so large that came to listen to his exhortations as when he held the meeting from house to house. To some of them it was too much like going to church; and, from habit, they disliked that sort of restraint which being seated in a church implied. Others thought that pride was at the bottom of it, and said, some of them openly, "If the minister is too proud to hold his meetings in our houses, we are too proud to go into his fine house." But this the Doctor did not hear. So he kept on with good resolution, through fair weather and foul; believing in time the seed sown would spring up and bear fruit.

Donald until he attempted this work of benevolence—or

perhaps, more properly, of friendship, for it was mainly to gratify the Doctor that he made the proposal—was not well acquainted with this locality. He owned land in that vicinity, but as it was wild land, and most of it woods, he had not, since taking charge of his property, had occasion to visit it; he may in his rides have passed there, but that was all. The settlement, if it could be called such, was in a gorge of the mountains, through which a small stream ran, and on which some years since a mill of some kind had been erected and quite a number of small houses put up; some of them nothing more than shanties, or houses built of boards nailed perpendicularly to very slight timbers; others were log-huts, with clay daubed between the logs; one or two were constructed more like common farm-houses, well covered with shingles, and one in particular claimed superiority over the rest, in that it once had a covering of red paint, and was, at the time we are treating of, evidently in better repair and more cared for than the rest.

The mill had, no doubt, caused in its day the erection of these tenements; but it was now a mere ruin; the roof had partly been blown off, the wheel was covered with moss, the dam was broken down, and where the pond had been was a mass of jungle, wild-briers, scrub-spruce, and cedar, and the little stream flowed through in its old channel, and seemed glad when its waters had left the desolate scene and could sport and sparkle below, where the hand of man had never meddled with its passage.

The persons who occupied this region were, of course, poor. Some lived here because they could find no other abode; for, in the country, if a man does not own the house he occupies, he is liable to be compelled to procure a covering wherever it can be found, or remove from the place entirely. Some were born here; but all seemed to thrive, if numbers may be counted as thrift. Every house teemed with children, and the ten or twelve houses scattered within the space of a half-mile along the stream might, in all, count sixty souls. Whortleberries and blackberries grew there in great abundance, and in the season of them, women and children gathered in quite a sum by carrying them around through different portions of the town for sale. Chestnuts, too, were plenty, and white walnuts and black cherries. All these were a source of revenue to those who were industrious enough to gather them. Some of the men hired themselves, through the summer months, to farmers, returning home every Saturday night; others found employment by passing over the mountain and working at Mr. Norseworthy's limestone quarry; but almost

all the men found employment in the winter in cutting wood on the mountains not far from their settlement. Mr. Tigh had come into possession of a large tract of woodland near there—it was said, by an unwarrantable foreclosure of a mortgage at a time when the debtor was in feeble health, and during an unparalleled pressure on the money market. Tigh was selling off the wood, and his agent occupied the red-painted house already described. This man, by the help of Mr. Tigh, kept on hand a supply of such articles as the poor families needed; it was, to be sure, a great convenience to them, but, as he charged what he pleased, they had to pay dearly for it. He gave them credit; and, as they were always in his debt, they became, in a great measure, dependent upon his will. If Jaques wanted a job done, they must do it. And no matter who else might ask their services for cutting or drawing wood, if Mr. Jaques needed them, they knew what answer to give.

Mr. Jaques had never looked favourably upon the little building which Donald had erected. He did not care to do anything openly in opposition, for Squire Roland was not the man he wished to offend. But when Donald became somewhat acquainted with the situation of things there, he was not content to confine his efforts to the mere furnishing a house of worship for them. He saw there children of a proper age to be able to read and write, without knowing even their letters. There was no opportunity to go to school, even if the parents could have afforded to send them, short of a three mile walk. It therefore occurred to him that some means ought to be used to remedy this evil. And his first step was to visit the families and see if they were willing to send their children, provided a teacher could be obtained without cost to them. He found the mothers, for the most part, quite in favour of it. So, through the influence of Dr. Ransom, a young lady, a farmer's daughter, was hired; and, as she entered with spirit on the work and took pains to make the exercises pleasant to the children, it was well attended. If Donald had stopped here, in all probability he would have encountered little difficulty; but it was not possible for one with the naturally kind feelings he possessed, when once they became enlisted, to stop short in a good work, when so much more seemed needful. He had, by visiting among them, been troubled by witnessing the manifest poverty under which they suffered. And it was not until he ascertained the true state of things that he was able to solve the problem: how it was that able-bodied men in our country, where food was cheap and wages remunerative, should only be able to maintain their families in a condition

but little better than savages. With one of these families he had become more intimate than with any of the rest. He had noticed an effort on the part of the young woman to make the best of things about her; everything was clean and orderly. She herself, although plainly dressed, looked clean and wholesome; her children, too, were not in rags, as too many in the neighbourhood were; still it was evident that the most had to be made of what materials she had. One day, when he had stepped in to get a drink of water, and had been asked by the young woman to take a seat, he said, as he sat down:

"Your husband seems to have constant employment. I very seldom find him at home."

"Yes, sir; there are few days in the year that he is not at work; and yet, for all that, he don't seem to get ahead much. It's hard making the ends meet."

"And yet you seem to live more comfortably than most of your neighbours."

"That may be, sir; but what my husband gets he spends for what his family needs. He never touches a drop of strong drink. It's that, sir, that keeps the most of 'em in the condition you see 'em. But that an't all, sir. You see, there is little money that comes into the neighbourhood for pay of wages; it all has to go through the hands of Mr. Jaques."

"Indeed! How is that?"

"Why, you see, sir, firstly, the houses is all rented by Mr. Jaques; and the condition is, that whenever he wants their help they must go, no matter whatever job they might have. Then again he pays no money; but they must take it out in store goods. To be sure, at the end of the month, if there is any over, he pays the money; but somehow, sir, it's seldom, indeed, that is the case. How it is, I don't know. Some think —though I don't like to say it—that he an't over and above honest in his charges."

"But your husband, as you have told me, works often for Mr. Norseworthy. Does he not pay him in money?"

"Not a cent, sir; it's all in orders on Mr. Jaques; but somehow, of late it seems hard gettin' even an order from that gentleman. I don't know how it is; but it is feared the cotton-mill an't a very thriving concern. The dam has broke down twice this season a'ready; and my husband, who worked at it, says he should not be surprised if the first hard rain carried it clean off, it's such a shammy affair: and if what he hears from the men there is true, it wouldn't be strange if the whole concern blew up afore long. But concerning our

people here, and what keeps the most on 'em so poor, I an't told you the worst on it yet. You see, sir, you know this is an out-of-the-way place; and people think they can do things here which they wouldn't like to do elsewhere. Cards, you know, sir, and such things, an't very reputable in our town."

"But does Mr. Jaques allow of such things?"

"Well, sir, allow it or not, there's quite a gathering there every evening; and some come there that people wouldn't think of. And then you know, sir, where there is gambling there is drinking; and it is my firm belief, and my husband says so too, that he believes there is more money spent there by our men here than goes to feed and clothe their families. We was in hopes, since Dr. Ransom set up meetings here, that it would be better; and it is better, in some sort. I know that three of the men, besides my husband, that are regular to the meetings, have left off spending their evenings at the store; and I hope more of 'em will come in in time, if the Reverend won't get discouraged."

"He is not likely to be discouraged at trifles. But did I understand you, Mrs. Lacy, that your husband engaged also in this business of gambling?"

"Him! Oh! no, sir; not him. He'd scorn the thing. No, sir. John spends his evenings to home with me and the children. Oh! no, sir. Poverty is bad enough; but we can get along with our small means somehow; but I should have no heart to live at all, if he was like some on 'em."

"Well, Mrs. Lacy, I am glad to learn some things you have told me; for although it is a sad story, yet it will enable me to judge more correctly about things here."

"I hope, Mr. Roland, you won't breathe a word about what I've been sayin'; but knowin' that you are so well disposed to help us, I have been off my guard, and just spoke freely as the thoughts come. You won't mention it, sir, will you?"

"Give yourself not the least concern, my dear madam. I shall not lisp what you have told me. But let me ask you one more question. If I could procure a comfortable house for you, in a part of the town where your husband could get work among the farmers, and where you would not be compelled to be under the particular will of any one man, would you be willing to remove there?"

"O Mr. Roland!" and the young woman clasped her hands together, while the tears rolled down her face. "O sir! if you could do it! I and my husband would bless you

all our days! O sir! we've been strugglin' and tryin' to see if there was no way that we could get into some better condition; but, sir, you don't know, when people have nothing but their hands to do with, and then with no fair chance even to do their best with *them*, how hard it is to get out of their difficulties."

"Don't be discouraged then, Mrs. Lacy. You shall not be here long, if I can help you."

"May Heaven's best blessing rest upon you;" and bursting into a flood of weeping as she covered her face, Donald, with a full heart, left the place, and mounting Hunter, started for home. Donald had not realized how far the day was spent; for the sun had set and the shadows of evening were gathering fast; but the moon was rising as he left the gorge; and thinking he would have time to make a call at Dr. Ransom's, turned from the direct road to his home into a narrow cart-track that led through a slope of the mountain, to make a shorter cut to the highway that led by the parsonage. He was descending into a hollow from whence sprang a small rise of ground on the opposite side; and through that hollow ran the stream which at some little distance turned the cotton-mill of Mr. Norseworthy. His mind was in a more peaceful state than usual. He had been for a time, at least, led out of himself; he had come in contact with poverty; his sympathies had been excited; he had been planning a good deed—in fact, he was beginning to taste the blessedness of his Master's work, although he knew it not. There was a calm in the troubled waters, but he knew not what holy influence had hushed them. He was thinking, but not of himself. A field of usefulness had all at once opened before him. His many acres that lay scattered about him he saw now could be turned to account—not to add to his wealth, but to lighten the burdens that many of his fellows were struggling and staggering under. Why had he never thought of it before? He cannot tell. All he knows is that an incubus seems to have been removed from his heart, that had held him in sore bondage. Towering trees lined the path on either side, and the light of the moon merely fell in straggling patches, barely enough, in that narrow glen, to make the path visible. Just before he reached the bridge that spanned the brook, he saw a man descending the opposite hill, and about to step on the bridge. Out of politeness he stopped his horse to let the footman pass first; but seeing the man pause, as though wishing the rider first to cross, he said:

"Please, sir, pass over; there is scarcely room for two of us at a time."

The stranger started, and, as he crossed the bridge, Donald thought he recognized the gait, although he could not get a clear glimpse of the face, as the man wore a thick pea-jacket, the collar of which came up close to his hat. As he was about to pass, Donald spoke in a soft, kind tone of voice:

"James, is that you?"

There was no reply.

"Cousin James, is that you?"

James Peabody, for it was he, stopped, and turning toward him with a deadly scowl—

"Yes, it's me; and you had better go on your way."

The look and the tone of voice might well have alarmed a person even as courageous as Donald, for he was unarmed; the place was lonely, and he had reason to know that his antagonist was a desperate character.

"I am ready to go on my way, James; but as you and I are alone now, and it so seldom we meet, I wish to have a few words with you."

"The fewer words we have together, the better may be for us both; the better now at any rate."

"I do not wish to waste words with you, James, I only wish to know in what way I can help you."

"Help me!" and he swore a bitter oath. "Help me! After you have ruined my character, turned me off upon the world, and made a vagabond of me! and now talk of helping me!" and again he broke out into horrible profanity, and ended with saying, "I tell you, go on your way, or you and I may both be sorry we ever met here."

"You know what you are saying now, James, is not true."

"You dare tell me I lie!"

"I dare tell you what you have just charged to me is not true, and more than that, you know it is not true. I might bring up the past, but I do not wish to add to your misery; you are your own enemy, and all I want is to know what I can do to help you to change your course. I beg of you to listen to me; do not let your passions hinder you from accepting aid from the only friend you have in the world who can help you." And so saying, Donald alighted from his horse.

"What did you do that for?" said Peabody, as he moved a step or two back, putting his hand at the same time within his bosom, as though to draw forth a weapon. "Keep clear of me, I tell you."

Donald saw the movement, but inspired with the noble pur-

pose of endeavouring to snatch his wretched kinsman from the abyss into which he knew he was plunging, was lifted above the fear of personal danger, although he might well have taken warning from the past.

"I have no idea, James, of approaching you for any purpose but that of kindness, nor can I believe you would attempt to do any violence to me, when I assure you I am unarmed and at your mercy. I want you to lay aside for a moment the suspicious feelings you manifest, and think what motive I can have but that of kindness in thus facing you."

Peabody immediately drew forth the pistol on which his hand had been placed, and firing it in the air, dropped it on the ground.

"Now the devil can't tempt me in *that* way, for though I hate you bad enough, I don't want your blood to be on my hands. Now what have you to say?"

"Just what I said to you a few moments since. What can I do to help you?"

"How do you know I need any help? I've got money. See here," and putting his hand in his pocket, he drew forth a quantity of silver change; "do you hear it jingle? it's the real stuff."

"And how was it earned, James? Answer me bravely and truly as a man."

Peabody hesitated a moment.

"It was earned fairly." This was said in rather a more moderate tone of voice.

That may be so; but answer me candidly and as a man, To what does the course in which you earned it lead?"

"Where does it lead? To hell, I suppose! that is, if there is such a place."

"To what it may lead hereafter, you and I will one day know better than we now do; but we both know that it leads to loss of character, to vicious habits, to want and misery here."

"Well, then, it just suits me. I have no character to lose, and when the rest comes, I must bear it as I can. I can but die in your poor-house; you won't begrudge the taxes you pay for that I hope. I shan't ask you to come to the funeral."

"This is idle talk, James, and you know it. You well know I gave you a good chance to do for yourself; and your conscience, if you will listen to it, will acquit me for every step I took in your case that might seem harsh. But let the past go; you know that you are now pursuing a

wrong track. I want to help you out of it; you are yet young; a little resolution will save you; your character may be redeemed, your standing in society regained, and your life be made a comfort to yourself and a blessing to others."

"My life! it an't worth the snap of a finger to me or any one else. My character! who of your towns-folk would associate with Jim Peabody? and even you would be ashamed to talk with me where there was any one to see but these trees and the moon yonder."

"So far from that, James, I will take you under my own roof; I will do it this very night. Come, will you relinquish your purpose to-night and go with me?"

"What do you know of my purpose to-night?"

"I may have judged wrong, but my belief is that you are on your way to a place where some of the lowest characters are in the habit of assembling night after night, there to associate with men whom in your heart you despise, and in pursuits which you know are not only illegal, but ruinous in the end."

"And I suppose you mean to take the law into your hands, and send old Busby after us."

"I shall certainly do what my oath binds me to do in breaking up a vile haunt, and bringing to justice the offenders against society. But I ask you now, James, in all sincerity, to stop your course. I ask you to let me help you. Go with me home; shut yourself away from evil companions; let it be known that you have resolved to make a man of yourself; and then we will devise together some plan for the future, either in this place or elsewhere. Money shall not be wanting to aid you in any honest and honourable pursuit. Now do, James; I entreat of you, listen to me."

Donald put forth his hand, as if to seal this earnest appeal by taking that of his cousin.

"No, no, Donald; I cannot take your hand. No, no. This hand of mine once aimed at your life. I am not quite so hardened as to forget *that*. I am a poor, lost, miserable blackguard, and I wish I was in my grave."

"James, James! do not say so;" and Donald placed his hand on his cousin's shoulder. A violent tremour shook the frame of the latter; convulsive sobs broke forth. Donald encouraged, laid hold of his arm, saying, with a voice tremulous with emotion:

"Come, now, cousin James—come, now, let us go home together."

Apparently yielding to this earnest entreaty, Peabody advanced a few steps and then suddenly stopped.

"No, no, Donald; this won't do. I am bad enough, but not so lost to all feeling as to do what you now ask. I cannot go under your roof. I should feel that I was a worse villain than I am, although I'm bad enough, God knows."

"Where will you go then, James—to your old haunts?"

"No, no, never again, so help me God!" and taking from his pocket the money he had vauntingly held in his hand a few moments before, he threw the whole, with great force, into the dense wood; and their jingle could be heard as they fell among the rocks that lay in broken masses on the hillside.

"There! the devil can't tempt me that way now, either. A man with not a cent in his pocket can't gamble; and I know the bloody villains wouldn't trust me for a shilling."

Donald was astounded at witnessing this act. He could scarcely credit his senses. A change so sudden and apparently so sincere! But where could the poor sufferer go, and without any means for subsistence? At length he said:

"Why not, then, James, go home to your mother?"

"Go home to my mother! That would be going to your house, would it not?"

"By no means. She is in her own home. I have fitted up the Stanwood house, made her a deed of it and ten acres of the land around it, and settled an annuity upon her sufficient to enable her to live respectably."

"You have! how long since?"

"Some three months. How long since you have seen her?"

"Seen her? Why, not three days ago."

"Did she say nothing of this to you?"

"No, not a word."

They were both silent a few moments, when Peabody said:

"This is strange news to me; but I guess well enough the reason why she did not tell me. Well, it is best as it is. She ought not to be under your roof. Donald, that woman has got hell in her heart."

"*James! James!* do not speak so. Remember she is your mother."

Prefacing his remarks with a terrible oath: "You need not tell me that. Yes, she is my mother; but hellish as is the temper I inherit from her, I am not quite so lost to all human feeling as to plot against the very one who was

giving me a home and a living. Donald, my mother hates you; and I warn you now, she will ruin you if she can."

"I hope she does not hate me. I know she had her feelings excited about what I considered a trifling matter; but she will get over that in a little while. When she left my house she was quite pleasant; and I call in to see her occasionally, and find out if she needs my assistance in any way."

Again Peabody indulged in a string of profanity, not apparently for any other purpose than to relieve his mind.

Donald, for the first time, checked him.

"If I were you, James, I would try and break myself of that habit. It does not benefit you nor any one else. You have made one good resolution to-night; I wish you would make another. And as you mean to change your associates, would it not be well to lay aside their peculiar dialect?"

"I understand you. I know you never swore; but I have been where nothing else is heard. You are right there too. I ought to change my language as well as other things. I will try; but it won't be very easy work, especially as I feel just now. But I believe I shall take your advice and go to the old woman's. She dare not turn me off, I know; and as soon as some chance offers, I shall ship for sea. That will be the best place for me, for a while, at any rate. I can't pray for you, Donald, and I can't say even God bless you; for my lips have been too much used to cursing for any such work as that But I hope you may be able to thwart the plans of your enemies; and if ever my hand refuses to do a kind deed for you in your need, may it be palsied for ever. You have, I know, at the risk of your life, to-night stood between me and hell; and I shan't forget it."

Donald seized his hand.

"All is forgiven between us, cousin James?"

"If you can forgive, I am sure I may."

Peabody then stepped to where he had dropped his pistol, picked it up, and threw it where he had scattered his money; and then entering the woods in the direction of his mother's home, was soon lost to sight. Donald stood a moment by the side of Hunter, watching the course which his cousin took, and then mounted and pursued his way.

Little did Donald Roland imagine, when he undertook the erection of that building at the request of his pastor, that it would be an introduction to a new state of feeling, if not of existence. By imperceptible degrees he had been drawn to look away from himself—that little centre round which his thoughts had hitherto clustered. Now he finds himself inte-

rested in the trials and cares of his fellows; and his thoughts are busy devising plans for their relief. And every kind feeling thus called into play tended to open the flood-gates of his heart and expand his moral sensibilities. There can be no doubt that the glow of feeling which had been kindled by his interview with Mrs. Lacy led immediately to his bold and manly effort to arrest his outcast relative in his career to ruin. He had not met with him since their interview on Chestnut Mountain, nor indeed had he heard anything from him, and supposed, after making himself liable to prosecution, he had fled to the city to mingle with outcasts there. But now, no sooner had he recognized him, even through his disguise, than his heart, softened by sympathy with the suffering, opened kindly toward this lost one. It was an impulse of the moment; but it strengthened as he proceeded; it made him fearless in a moment of serious danger; and finally triumphed, as love and kindness will, over hatred and malice. And now a richer joy enlivens and soothes his spirit than he has ever known before. He is tasting the bliss of doing good. It was, indeed, but a mere effort of natural feeling; no higher motive prompted it; yet it was a duty, and duty performed under trying circumstances. And he goes on his way with a lighter heart than he had ever known before; and he is planning deeds of benevolence; and the world about him has lost much of that dreary aspect which so long had shed a gloom upon his heart.

CHAPTER X.

SALMON Tigh's visit at Mr. Sandford's was a mere scouting expedition on his part; it afforded some amusement to the ladies as well as annoyance. The impression which had been made on the mind of Mrs. Sandford and Eva by the fears which Roland had expressed in regard to the appearance of this gentleman at their house, was very much relieved by Mr. Tigh's conduct through the evening; he was affable and cautious in his behaviour, amused them with quaint stories, and many of them of a personal nature, wherein he, Mr. Tigh, figured as a person of very kind feelings and really a man who felt that his great business was to help his fellow-creatures; so that in a few hours they had forgotten all that Donald said about him.

Mr. Sandford came in when the evening had been half spent; he was somewhat surprised and not a little mortified to find who was likely to be his guest for the night, but concealed all unpleasant feelings as well as he could. The Misses Herbert, however, who had called in early in the evening, had no doubt added very materially to the rather pleasant aspect of the social scene. Mr. Tigh was a widower, and having a very confident belief that money was all-powerful in winning the female heart, had no scruples in making pretensions far beyond the circle of life to which he naturally belonged. Struck with the beauty of the elder Miss Herbert, he took much pains through the evening to address his remarks to her; for although Eva had attracted his notice in the afternoon, he soon learned that she was already married, and of course beyond his reach. The fact of this susceptibility on the part of Mr. Tigh had the immediate effect of warding off from Mr. Sandford many things that might otherwise have been unpleasant.

But Mr. Tigh was a shrewd man, and had come, as has been said, to make a reconnoissance. He had formed a cer-

tain opinion of Mr. Sandford, and he wished to assure himself that his opinion was correct; and he went away with his confidence in him stronger than ever. He well knew that a man surrounded with the influences which environed Mr. Sandford would not only make every effort to meet his obligations, but would be safe to trust without such security as he would demand from men less refined in feeling, and whose standing with their family and society in general was not so dear to them. It was unfortunate for this gentleman that Mr. Tigh had these views and feelings in reference to him, as it is in general not good for any man to find the way to the coffers of a money-lender made easy.

Mr. Tigh, after leaving Mr. Sandford, made a call on Mr. Jaques, and they had a long private conference; things had not been going on very prosperously with Mr. Jaques for some time past; the nest of gamblers that had made his house a resort, had been broken up and scattered, for Donald lost no time in sending Mr. Busby to look after matters there, and other influences at work in the Notch, as it was called, did not please that gentleman.

"But why is it," said Tigh, "that the two hundred cord of wood that was to have been taken to the lower landing, has not a load of it been received?"

"Because, I tell you, the hands have all been working; some for Norseworthy, building up his dam, and then that fellow Roland has enticed them off to work for him cutting down timber."

"But is not our money as good as his?"

"It seems not." Mr. Jaques did not tell him that the men received very little, if any, of "our money," it had to pay such a heavy toll in passing through his hands.

"What is he cutting timber for?"

"Well, I hear—but I hardly believe he can be such a d—d fool as to do it—but I hear he is going to put up ever so many small houses in different parts on his lands, to let to working men."

"To make money out of them."

"He can't make much money out of them; but they say he's taken a strange turn lately; you know he has let a good deal of his land lay idle; I suppose he had money enough, and didn't care to bother himself with farming; but he has taken it into his head to work the whole concern."

"But you don't suppose he means to put such fellows as live up here on his farm?"

"I don't know what he means to do, but I know that some of the best of them are working for him now."

"Why don't you turn them out of their houses then? You have the power to do so."

"Yes, the houses are let on conditions, I know; but a man like me don't want to have a tussle with a rich man like Roland; he has taken a notion to help some of these fellows; you know he has built a kind of meeting-house for them, and set up a school, and all that, and more than all, I am going to clear out myself."

"You are, eh! and leave my work half done?"

"Can't help that; it's hard living here."

"I suppose you are ready to settle with me then?"

"Yes, I am ready to settle, if I had anything to settle with; I am as poor, Tigh, as the meanest devil in the Notch."

Tigh looked at him with his keen gray eye for some moments in silence; he knew he was lying to him, but he also knew that there was nothing visible or tangible that he could take hold of; there were indeed some painted casks and some sugar and flour-barrels, but he had satisfied himself previously that they were empty or nearly so, and he knew that Jaques owed him at least twelve hundred dollars. Now to a man of as much property as Tigh was said to possess, twelve hundred dollars was a small matter; but Mr. Tigh did not consider it so; it would grate upon his soul like a rasp; debts he never released nor forgave. No means, however underhand or despicable, would he stop at a moment to harass a poor and honest debtor; but he knew Jaques to be a rogue, and he also knew that by extortion he was making his money, and so long as he was accumulating that, Tigh felt he was secure in making advances. But the rogue has come to a halt, and fairly bearded him. Tigh also knew that more than three hundred cords of wood had been carried off, and that the very two hundred cords about which this conversation first began was nowhere. He therefore was a little staggered as to what he should *say;* what he intended to *do* he had already resolved upon; but if possible he must keep cool, and put on a smooth face; so giving his chum a penetrating look, he said, in quite a mild tone:

"Well, I am sorry for this; I thought you was doing well."

"Well, so I was, but I've been unfortunate."

Tigh looked at him again.

"How? have you been speculating?"

"Yes, I have."

"What in?"

"In different ways; there is more ways than one for a man to lose money in that sort of business."

"You haven't been gambling?"

"Well, something that way."

"Who has won from you?"

"That's a secret, you know; it wouldn't be honourable in me to tell."

If Tigh could have put the feelings of his soul at that moment into his countenance, it would have expressed the most bitter rage and the most supreme contempt; as it was, it merely manifested the most utter astonishment; his eyes enlarged, his mouth opened, at least the under-jaw dropped, and his brow showed all the wrinkles that could possibly be gathered there. Jaques did not notice it, he was looking on the floor, and with a stick he held in his hand, a good stout one, was making diagrams in the white sand.

"You don't mean to give up the agency here?"

"How can I do anything, without a cent of money to help myself with?"

"But if I give you money? La, I an't so frightened by the loss of a few hundred dollars that I should fear to help a man who tells me frankly that he has got to the end of the rope; that an't my way, you know that, Jim." And Mr. Tigh's face was as smooth and placid as possible; he would not, though, out of kindness, have given one dollar to the individual before him, if that dollar would have saved him from the gallows. The latter, however, cast a glance at his visitor, rather from curiosity than anything else, but seeing such a complacent countenance, no doubt a thought occurred to him—they were both playing a game.

"Are you in earnest?"

"To be sure I am; don't you know Salmo Tigh yet?"

"Well, that's another thing; if I can have help, I might, to be sure, do something."

"That's like a man, now; help! you shan't want for help; yes, go this very day and get all the men you can hire, start down the wood, and keep the two yoke of oxen at work, and hire more teams if you can get them, and haul off as fast as you cut; and here is fifty dollars to begin with;" and Mr. Tigh, taking out his pocket-book, counted very deliberately five tens, and handing them over—

"There, now; don't say after this that old Salmon Tigh was afraid to trust a man because he lost money by him."

Jaques took the money; the act confounded all his notions of the character of the money-lender, and the whole scene had resulted so differently from what he expected, that his own cunning was confounded. It had been the design of the rogue to have slipped out of the way before Tigh could know

anything of the matter; for he had sold oxen, carts, and everything else belonging to the establishment; the latter had come very unexpectedly upon him, and he anticipated, the moment he saw him, a very stormy time; but, having all his preparations made for departure, he knew his creditor could do nothing, and all he wanted was time to get off; and all Mr. Tigh's manouvering was intended merely to lull the suspicions of his victim until he could get a warrant for his arrest, and a few hours would accomplish that.

"And now, Jim, go to work, beware of speculating, and in a week at furthest I will be here, and if more money is wanted, why, I guess it can be had; but can you give me a glass of sling before I go?"

Without making any reply, a bottle was taken from the shelf and placed upon the counter, and a small box with sugar placed beside it.

"Help yourself."

"Free of cost, I suppose?" said Tigh, as he poured out the liquor, attempting to put on a smile. It was, however, rather a grim affair.

"Oh! yes. Take as much as you want."

"Well, I generally use caution about such things."

The drink was disposed of; and, with apparently a cheerful temper, Mr. Salmon Tigh mounted his gig and drove off, saying, as he started:

"In about a week you will see me again."

"All right." And then letting off a budget of oaths, and hurrying quickly round to gather up some necessary articles, in less than a quarter of an hour Mr. Jim Jaques was on a fleet horse and making tracks for parts unknown.

Mr. Tigh was making all the speed he could toward the house of his lawyer, when he was suddenly arrested by a person who, driving very rapidly, had overtaken him and had reined up by his side.

"Ah friend Salmon! how are you? What is the matter now?"

"Nothing. Why?"

"Why? Because you drive so like Jehu. They say I always drive as if the—somebody, you know who—was after me; but you like to beat me this time. I saw your gig cross the road soon after I left the mill, and whipped up; but your old stump there has more go in him than one would think for. But what's in the wind to-day? After a lame duck?"

"I've some little business in town, and I want to be on my way home."

"Then you didn't go home yesterday?"

"No."

"Where did you spend the night? Why not have given me a call? Given you a good supper and clean bed."

"Stayed at Squire Sandford's."

"At Sandford's!" And Mr. Norseworthy—for it was he—looked somewhat surprised, and was not a little startled, but concealed as much as possible any emotion.

"Yes, at Sandford's. Anything strange in that?"

"Oh! no. Only I didn't know—you haven't usually called there—that's all. All right, all right. Nice family—very. Have any talk with Sandford?"

"About what?"

"Oh! nothing particular. Did he tell you how we are getting along at the mill?" Mr. Norseworthy had a particular motive for asking that question.

"Nothing particular. We talked about other things. Had some talk about ladies."

"Ladies, hey? Ha! ha! ha! Well done! Who have you got in your head now?"

"Oh! well—that's a secret, you know."

"That's right. Ay, you're a sly dog! But, Tigh, have you ever seen that beauty at Bradford's—the oldest of those Herbert girls? There's a prize for you."

Tigh looked very wise, and pretending ignorance, asked:

"How old is she?"

"Oh! not much over eighteen."

"A pretty age for one of my years!"

"Just the very thing. Now mind what I say, Tigh—don't you ever marry a woman near your own age. You are set in your way, and she would likely be set in her way; and a pretty kettle of fish there would be between you. No, no. Get a young one, and then you know you can bend her to your will and make what you please of her. Now do as I say, or you'll get into hot water, see if you don't." This advice Mr. Norseworthy knew would be very acceptable.

"Do you really give me that advice?"

"I do, upon honour."

"What do you say is the name of that young lady?" Tigh knew her name, and had already, in conversation with Mr. Sandford—by putting questions to that gentleman just as if it were a mere matter of curiosity—learned more about the Herbert family than he knew Norseworthy could possibly tell him; and he also made up his mind for a serious attack in that quarter. A little difficulty, however, had presented itself

in the way of accomplishing his object; and that was, how to get access to the lady. He had no business relations with Mr. Bradford that might afford an excuse for calling at his house; and he could not think of asking Mr. Sandford to do the part of cicerone. Between himself and that gentleman there was a difference which Mr. Tigh was conscious of; and it forbade any attempt on his part to bridge it over, especially as Mr. Sandford was quite reserved, and not disposed to familiarity. Norseworthy might be some help to him in the case; and therefore he was very willing to be led on, hoping something might turn up to favour his project. Mr. Norseworthy had other and very important business with Mr. Tigh this morning; but knowing his man well, he was humouring his weak side, hoping thereby to accomplish his own end. He had no idea that Miss Herbert was within the reach of Mr. Tigh's fascination; but he was quite willing to give him encouragement. He therefore answered very readily:

"Her name is Herbert—Mary, I believe—Miss Mary Herbert; and a finer, prettier girl there isn't to be found within a hundred miles' circuit."

"You think so?"

"I know so."

"Well, but if she is as likely a person as you say, would she be induced, you think, to listen to my proposals? You know, in general, youngerly men are preferred to those of riper years; though as for that, I feel as young as ever I was."

"You forget, Tigh, that a man with three hundred thousand on his back is never old."

"Not so much as that; you've got it too high."

"Not a stiver. Will you promise to leave me all over that sum? By George! I wouldn't ask any more."

Mr. Tigh turned his head one side. Mr. Norseworthy had touched another weak point: he was well aware of it.

"What do you think, Norseworthy, a man said to me the other day?"

"What was it?"

"'Salmon Tigh,' said he, 'what do you keep running round the country and exposing yourself to all weathers—a man as rich as you are?'

"'What do you mean by rich?' said I. 'What do you suppose I'm worth?'

"'Well,' said he, 'I can't tell exactly; but people in general put you down for five hundred thousand.'"

"I knew I hadn't put it high enough," said Norseworthy. "Come, will you put that clause in your will, leaving me all

over three hundred thousand, and make me one of your executors ?"

"Then you really advise me to think of this lady ?"

"You can't find a better."

Tigh was silent a moment—busy whipping some dried stocks of wormwood that stood within reach of his lash.

"But how shall I see this lady you recommend so highly ?"

"Don't you know Bradford ?"

"Yes ; but I have no special business with him that would give me occasion to call on him."

"Well, that to be sure ! " And Mr. Norseworthy was at fault, and was thinking how matters might be managed, when Tigh resumed :

"Do you think it would answer for a gentleman who had been introduced to a lady, and spent some hours in conversation with her, to call on her, even if she had not given him an invitation ? "

"Do I think so ? yes, by all means. But you have seen her, then ?"

"I rather think I have seen the lady you describe."

"And been introduced to her, too ?"

Tigh answered by a little chuckle of a laugh.

"You are a sly one, Tigh. I'm getting afraid of you. But when did you see her ? "

"No matter about that. But you think it would do for me to call on her ? "

"A man with such a heap of gold on his back needn't be afraid of anything or anybody. I must tell you, however, there has been a story round that young Roland — Squire Roland—was making up to her ; how true it is, I don't know. But I have heard strange news, this morning, about *him*."

"What is it ?"

"They say he is like to be ousted out of all his property."

"How so ?"

"In the first place, it is said, that he is no son of old Roland; that is one story; another is, that a will has been found that cuts him off without a dollar."

"You don't say ! "

"That is the story; how true it is, I don't know. But if either part of it is true, the better chance for you, in case he had any notions that were going to interfere with your plans. Young girls are not, in general, much disposed to encourage men that can't tell who were their parents, especially with neither land nor stocks to back them up."

"But do you think there is any truth in this report?"

Mr. Tigh asked this question for the same reason that he feigned surprise on the first mention of it. He knew much more about it than did Mr. Norseworthy; and was already working in secret with those who were digging the mine that was to destroy the fortunes and blast the hopes of one whose moral worth outweighed them all. Having been promised a large percentage on what money might be needed in accomplishing their plan, he felt no particular call to make special inquiry as to the justice or injustice of the matter; nor did even a moment's regret touch his mind at the probable consequences, if they should succeed, to a young man of delicate sensibility and refined taste, who should be hurled from a high position in society and of independence down amid the dregs of humanity, stripped of every cent.

"I can't tell what to think; so many strange things take place nowadays that hardly anything surprises me."

"It would be a terrible fall!"

"It will kill him outright. He is a fellow of strong feelings; grown up from boyhood to feel independent of the world; a good deal of pride; but yet, I must say, a noble-spirited fellow. 'Pon my soul, I pity him!"

"Well, we must all have our ups and downs."

"That's true; but it an't often such a downfall as this takes place. By the way, Salmon, I'm short to-day; how are you off?"

"Poor as a rat—hardly enough to pay my toll at the turnpike gate."

"I didn't suppose you had, but you know where to get it; and have it I must, or there'll be old hog to pay."

"Well, I can't help that."

"But I'm serious, and help you must."

"How am I to help you? I tell you I'm stripped—picked clean!"

"Haven't you a blank check with you?"

"What of that?"

"Because, if you haven't, I have."

"Ha, ha, ha! Norseworthy, I believe you would like me to hand over to you the key of my safe, with full right to do as you please with the contents!"

"No objections to that, by no means; but, Tigh, I tell you it is no joking matter. I must have a thousand dollars, or my credit will be ruined."

Salmon Tigh was not given to profanity, but he could not help, just then, letting off a few expressions that came as near to it as was necessary.

"A thousand dollars! Why, I gave you eight hundred dollars only last week! I tell you what, Norseworthy, this won't do. I shall quit all this kind of business; I'm tired of it."

Norseworthy put on a very serious face, and drawing up his reins as if about to go on his way—

"Well, if that's your game, so be it; and if it's for your interest to ruin me, you can do it." And, chirping to his horse was off in earnest.

"Stop, stop! where are you going?"

"There is no use stopping; you say you won't help me."

"I didn't."

"Well, you say you can't, which means the same thing."

"What have you got to give me?"

"As good a note as can be drawn," and taking from his pocket-book a paper neatly folded up, handed it for inspection. Tigh knit his brows as he looked over the article, and then shaking his head—

"I have two of these already—that you know."

"Yes; but this at short date, only sixty days."

"But, do you really believe Sandford is good?"

"Good! yes; he isn't as rich as you are; but anything he gives his name for will be paid as sure as the sun will rise to-morrow."

Mr. Norseworthy now alighted, and commenced figuring on a leaf of his pocket-book, and handing it to Tigh, that gentleman, still maintaining a heavy scowl, said:

"We must drive to the tavern there; if you must have it, I suppose you must."

And Mr. Norseworthy, taking the lead, drove off at a good round trot, Tigh following, although lagging considerably behind.

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Mr. Sandford drove up to his own stable on the evening of Mr. Tigh's visit at his house, and saw the horse and gig of that gentleman apparently put up for the night, he asked his hired man if the gentleman who owned them was in the house.

"I believe he is, sir; though how much of a gentleman he is, it's hard sayin'."

"Why so, Patrick?"

"Well, sir, he's an odd sort of a person, to be axing questions anent affairs that is none of his business; faith, sir, do you credit me, Mr. Sandford, and he wanted to know just how much wages you paid me, and the like o' that."

Mr. Sandford made no reply, but walked toward his house; his heart sank within him; a load was pressing upon it almost beyond endurance. That Mr. Tigh should be at his house, and just at this particular time, was a mystery; but that he should feel obliged to receive such a person as his guest, to be complaisant and make himself agreeable to a man evidently of low and vulgar views and feelings, and just at a time when a new burden of misfortune was pressing upon his mind, seemed to him a task almost beyond his power to go through with; but the bitterest drop in the cup was that his lovely wife, accustomed as she had ever been to that which was refined and delicate, should be obliged to entertain one of the peculiar stamp of Mr. Tigh. It was a humiliation he would once have thought he could never submit to; but he had began to feel that the rod was upon him; he could not clearly see the reason for it; but he believed most firmly that it was held by his heavenly Father. He *would* submit, he *would* be humble, God *could* help him; and on that blessed hope he would try to stay himself up.

And well was it for him that he was able to lean on such a prop; for dark clouds were settling fast on his earthly pro-

spects, and a storm was gathering that he had every reason to fear would sweep his property to ruin.

Alas! How little do they imagine what they lose who have no God, no Father in heaven; who have never made a covenant with Him, and on bended knee committed their interests for time and eternity to One whose will controls all hearts, and regulates all events. Death is not the only hour against which man needs the assurance of divine love; there are living deaths, sometimes more hard to bear than the stroke of the great destroyer. A thousand chances, if we please to call them such, flutter about our path through life, by which our hearts may be pierced; and they happen alike to all; no station nor age can ward them off; no power of man can break the blow which God in his providence designs to be laid upon us. But when the smitten heart can turn, with filial love and trust, the eye of faith above, and with the suffering Master say, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done," then do ministering angels hover about it and drop sweet thoughts within that soothe and cheer the soul, and brace the sufferer to meet the struggle, or to bear the grief.

But we must go back a little through the scenes of the past day in order to a clearer view of the cause why Mr. Sandford felt that the visit of Mr. Tigh was peculiarly unfortunate, and his own mind in no condition to entertain strangers.

Joseph Bradford had not taken any active part in the management of the mill; his only motive, as we have seen, being to give employment to his brother for the present, and a probable business for him if nothing better should offer; he had, however, learned more of the way things were managed there than Mr. Sandford. He had often been called upon to assist with his team in procuring machinery to supply that which had been broken, and at times to carry off bales of cotton batting and bring back cotton waste. He had also been called upon, and that more frequently than was convenient, to assist in carting sand to fill up and strengthen weak places in the dam, and on two several occasions, when it had given way entirely, was he busied with his team for a week at a time in this work. He did not fancy the employment in itself, and more than that, it took him away from labours on his own property not only more congenial, but which he felt to be necessary. From thus being often around the mill, he had an opportunity to see a little how things were going, and they did not please him. Then in spite of all the fair promises of Mr. Norseworthy, in regard to the profits which were to pay off the note he had given, nothing had yet come to him in that shape;

and although when the note became due, Mr. Norseworthy apparently without any trouble got it renewed, yet it had not been reduced one dollar. Joe Bradford had also a constant thorn in his side with the jealousy of Uncle Ben. Ben to be sure knew nothing of his young master's interest in the concern; he knew that Dave was engaged at the mill, as he supposed, a clerk. He did not much care about that; he was glad to have him busy. But he had a strong prejudice against Norseworthy, and would protest strongly against having the team or their master "workin' at dat old crazy dam."

One day as he was busy scattering some rails along a spot of fence that needed repairing, as the ground was free of frost, and spring work about to begin, it happened that Mr. Norseworthy passed by, and as he did so, reined up a moment to ask whether Joe could come with his team and carry off a load of cotton batting. Been made no remark at the time, but as soon as the gentleman had passed on, he straightened himself up, and looking steadily at his master.

"I blieve that man think, Josey, you an't nothin' to do but be teamin' for him; what fur he no do that business his self?"

"He has no horses, Uncle Ben."

"What fur he no buy 'em den, and keep de team like other folks?"

"Perhaps he prefers to hire."

"Ay, ay, dat hiring, I think, cost good deal of money; how much money he pay you dis eight, nine months past; my golly, pretty big sum, I think."

Joe did not reply; he was thinking.

"How much you say, Josey?"

"Well, Uncle Ben, I have not received any pay as yet."

"No pay! and you runnin' there a week at a time, month after month; my golly—I think, Josey, you foolish boy."

"He will pay me, no doubt, in time."

"Ay, ay, you see that man never pay you one cent, mine my word."

Although Bradford pretended to make light of the matter, the remarks of Uncle Ben had the effect to set him thinking. He had indeed thought it a little strange that no mention was ever made of pay, although Mr. Norseworthy was always very particular at the close of the job to jot down in his pocket-book the number of days' work; yet with him it seemed to be all the settlement necessary. Add to this the fact that Mr. Norseworthy was as busy driving round the country as ever, and as Bradford had reason to believe, hunting for money. These and some other hints which

had occasionally dropped from his brother in regard to the management of matters, so wrought upon his mind that he resolved to have an examination to ascertain how the affairs of the mill were prospering. So meeting Mr. Norseworthy one day, he asked:

"Do you not think, Mr. Norseworthy, we had better—you and Sandford and David—have a meeting, and see how you are getting on?"

"By all means, yes; any time. Yes, I will tell Sandford, and we will fix a day. Yes, you're right; I've been thinking the same thing myself. People ought always to keep a sharp look-out in business matters; that's my way you know. I will speak to Sandford, sometime, about it. Yes, you are right, it ought to be done."

"What day will you fix upon?"

"Oh! any day you please. You will be there too?"

"That is not necessary, without you wish it."

"Wish it! certainly I do. You are concerned, you know."

"Well, in a certain way. I should like to know how soon I may probably look for a dividend. I want to reduce that note as soon as possible."

"Certainly, certainly; by all means."

"What day do you say?"

"What day? well, let's see, day after to-morrow I think will be as good as any—say day after to-morrow. I will tell David to get things straightened up by that time; and we'll take a little look into matters, and see how we stand. All right. I'm glad you spoke of it."

And at the appointed time the meeting was held. The books, indeed, were not in a very clear state, for Mr. Norseworthy had a way of keeping many of his business transactions on loose pieces of paper; and David had to take many of his items from such fragmentary sources as Mr. Norseworthy could collect, and some from word of mouth. And, to do David justice, he had tried, but in vain, to keep a true record of transactions, for Mr. Norseworthy was always in a hurry. "He was too busy to attend to it just then," or "he had left his memorandum at home."

But the principal items, in which the owners of the concern were interested, could be got at. One was, how much the mill owed. This was gathered mostly from Mr. Norseworthy's pocket-book; for he, being purchaser as well as salesman, and "a world of business on his hands," would make a note of any transaction, slip the paper in that reservoir of bills, etc., carefully clasp it together, and there it was—safe no doubt;

but sometimes requiring quite a hunt to find it; and when found, none but he could tell whether the amount was for a debit or credit in the books. But at length the sum of all their indebtedness was come at. It seemed large, to be sure, and both Mr. Sandford and Bradford expressed some little surprise.

"Don't be frightened, gentlemen; wait till we see the other side."

The other side consisted of cash, *nothing;* that is, nothing to speak of. Bills receivable, *nothing;* they had all been discounted. The mill and stock on hand, or unsold in the hands of factors, were then the only items to be valued and put down. It did not take long to do that, and the balance was struck.

Mr. Sandford felt the blood almost curdling at his heart as he looked at the figures; he said nothing. Bradford merely remarked:

"Are you sure this account is correct, Mr. Norseworthy?"

"I don't know; it seems all right: but, the dogs take it! it looks bad. How under heaven things should turn out so, is beyond me! Let's go over it again. Sandford, you are correct at figures, just run over them again. It can't be—the devil is in it, somewhere!"

Mr. Sandford had looked over them; he was but too sure they were right. But to gratify Mr. Norseworthy, who was now walking the room, and smoothing down his nose with his hand, a habit with him when thinking hard.

"They seem to be correct," said Mr. Sandford, moving back his chair and heaving a sigh, although suppressing his emotion as much as possible.

"Right!" said Norseworthy.

"Yes, sir."

And that gentleman commenced walking again, muttering aloud,

"Well, well! to think how I have slaved night and day, and here we are—" then, stopping suddenly, "but, gentlemen, what am I to do? Here I am, my name out! notes coming due—the dogs! I shall be pulled to pieces—they'll take law of me, riddle me of every cent, and curse me to boot! Tell me what I am to do!" This was said in a loud voice; the man seemed almost beside himself.

"I know what I shall do," said David, "quit the concern, and that right off."

"But the four thousand five hundred dollars! who is to pay that?" said Norseworthy. "Quit! I should like to quit, too! My heavens! man, don't you see how it stands: here am I in

the gap! you must all shoulder to help me out, or bury me alive, just as you please. Rabbit it! I wouldn't give a penny to choose. I've smelt fire before, but never got quite into it till now. Come, come, gentlemen, shoulder to—don't let me die like a dog." And again he paced the room; sometimes rubbing his hands together as if in the act of washing them, and then twisting the hair on his foretop. Just then Tigh drove up, and Norseworthy, seeing the old gig, gave a whistle; and then turning to the other parties—

"Now, gents, mum's the word, keep close; that is, unless you want to smell fire and brimstone. I'll go down and get him off. Better have Satan at once among you than let that old grinder see those figures—mind, you hear?" And, so saying, the gentleman slipped from the room. It was some time before he returned. He came in with as long a face as ever; although, from the merry peals of laughter which came up from below, one would have thought him the happiest man in the world; but Mr. Norseworthy had a part to act, and he performed well. He knew that if a shadow of suspicion that all was not going on well at the mill should cross the mind of Tigh, there would be trouble of the worst kind. It was, to be sure, a terrible life to lead, thus to be in the power of a capricious, money-loving, unfeeling miser, who would rather see a man in torture, even unto death, than lose a debt; but Mr. Norseworthy had been in his power a long time, and had become used to it. He had learned, too, how to manage his leech, and, perhaps, could accomplish any end he wished to gain from Tigh better than any other man living; for, shrewd as the latter was in some things, he had weak points, which Norseworthy soon discovered, and never hesitated to take advantage of.

Mr. Norseworthy's long face was, however, not assumed for effect, although his cheerful look and merry laugh were doubtless so. He was now too much in earnest, and the matter too serious to be trifled with. The result of his operations was a real surprise to him as much as they were to those concerned with him. Mr. Norseworthy was not a rogue, as we have before stated, but he was of a sanguine disposition, always looking on the bright side of things. His great fault was a loose way of calculating; he could not bring himself to a close reckoning. All the little items that make up so great a part of profit and loss he overlooked. He knew what cotton waste cost him, and what cotton batting sold for, and between the two there seemed difference enough to absorb all possible expenses or occasional losses, and leave a great gain. I was perfectly true, therefore, that the result now placed before him

had taken him by surprise. The interview with Mr. Tigh had somewhat brought him to his senses, for he was scarcely himself before that. He therefore now took his seat, and holding up the fatal sheet of paper for a little while, he deliberately conned it; then placing it on the table—

"Well, gents, here we are—four thousand five hundred dollars worse off than when we began! What shall be done? I am in the gap; you see how it is—Mr. David, here, says he shall quit. Well, we would all like to quit, but the thing is how to do it. If we could get quit of the debts by all clearing out, that would be one way; but when a man has got a wife and children on his back, to say nothing of house and land, it isn't so easy crawling off."

Mr. Sandford now spoke:

"I should like to have a few minutes' private conversation with you, Mr. Norseworthy."

"By all means, sir."

And, leading the way into an adjoining room, as soon as they were seated Mr. Norseworthy said:

"That young man talks wild. Why, bless your soul, Sandford, you know and I know that this is a partnership concern. It is bad, I allow; how it has turned out so is all but miracle to me. But it is a joint concern, no mistake; and although that young fellow can quit, as he talks about, for he has nothing to pay with, yet he is liable, you know, for every dollar of debt the concern owes; that *you* know."

"You are correct there, sir," said Mr. Sandford; "although, between ourselves, one half is your loss, and the other half belongs to Mr. Bradford and myself to meet, yet, as you say, in the eye of the law, we are each individually responsible for the whole amount of debt. My proportion I cannot pay now, and shall not be able to do so for, perhaps, two months to come."

"That need make no difference whatever, my dear sir; not the least consequence; only this—let me think: day after to-morrow I have a thousand dollars to pay—that will be a rub, a hard one. I tell you what, Sandford—you say you will be in funds in two months—give me your note for one thousand dollars at sixty days. What do you say?"

"Well, sir, I suppose it is your due; but it must be on conditions that my interest in the concern ceases from this time."

"If you say so, yes; but you must help ease along until this scrape is ended. I'll manage it along if I can only have a little boosting once in a while. But if you all drop me like a hot potato, why, I must go to the dogs at once;

and then it will be slash and cut wherever they can find anything to grab. You know how that is. You see, if I am sent to the devil, you'll all have the score to pay."

Strange as it may seem for a man who had been brought up to business, Mr. Sandford had not thought of the possible consequences that might result from his connection with Mr. Norseworthy; that is, he had not thought of the matter until too late. He had, indeed, at times, asked himself the question, "How would I be situated in case Mr. Norseworthy should be unfortunate in his business?" But, although the question made him very uneasy for the time, yet the unvaried cheerfulness of Mr. Norseworthy, and the flattering representation he always made of the progress of the concern, lulled his fears, and then he had placed himself, more or less, under obligations to that gentleman. Mr. Norseworthy had procured money for him through the banks and other sources, and he could not well break with him. He now sees, however, very clearly the dilemma in which he is placed; but how to get out of it was another problem, and a difficult one too. He would, if possible, break away from all connection whatever with Mr. Norseworthy; for, although he believed him to be honest, he had lost all confidence in his management of business. Yet, in Mr. Sandford's present circumstances, Mr. Norseworthy was indispensable; he had the faculty of devising ways and means to raise money even in the worst of times, and at present, without such a helper, Mr. Sandford would have been very badly off.

He has, however, taken one step in the right direction; he has withdrawn from all future connection with the mill. He owns, indeed, one quarter of it, which he is ready to dispose of to any one, even at a loss; but as to its profits or losses he will have no further concern.

And now the reader will understand how it was that Mr. Norseworthy should have in his possession a note of Mr. Sandford's for a thousand dollars, and the urgent necessity Mr. Norseworthy was in to realize the money for it at his interview with Mr. Tigh, as recorded in the last chapter. And also under what a disheartening pressure he met that gentleman under his own roof.

The evening, indeed, passed off much pleasanter that Mr. Sandford had reason to anticipate, and his parting from Mr Tigh the next day was quite a friendly one. The load, however, on Mr. Sandford's mind was by no means relieved, and what added to it was an impression that his wife—that jewel of his heart for whose sake he would bear all that nature could stand, rather than one iota of trouble should sully her hap-

piness—had an unusual cast of sadness on her countenance. But he might have seen a glimpse of it before, if he had not been so absorbed in his own heart troubles. Women cannot well play the hypocrite. Their feelings may not be so intense as are those of the sterner sex, yet they exert a more powerful sway over their actions; and especially was this the case with this lovely woman. Her heart was naturally joyous, and its emotions played from her countenance through every feature. The heart must be heavy, indeed, that did not feel lighter in its radiance. How much her husband delighted in nurturing her happy, elastic spirit, years of devoted attention could testify. No lover in his day of tenderest courtship could have been more assiduous in gratifying every wish—in keeping alive the scintillations of love. It was not any deficiency or neglect on his part that has caused the fitful shadow which, like an April cloud, at times passes over those lovely features. The strange conduct of Mr. Tigh, his vulgar boldness under her husband's roof, the fears expressed by Roland, and, more than all, a strange silence and reserve of manner on the part of her husband, all had combined to throw a cloud upon her heart, and she could not wear her old bright, cheery look.

Mr. Tigh had taken his leave; and his host, weary in body and mind, retired to his own room and threw himself into his chair. He wished to be alone—he almost wished he *was* alone—that no loving wife or dear children were linked to him and his troubles. The burden that oppressed him was *their* love—*their* happiness. Alone he could meet the worst, and manfully brave life's ills; but to know that the beautiful vine, whose tendrils clasped him so closely as their support and pride, must fall with him—this was agony; this was the arrow that pierced his soul and bowed him down in sorrow. Presently, as he sits leaning his head upon his hands, wearied with his troubled thoughts, the door was opened, and Caroline entered. There was no smile, as usual, on her sweet face, neither was the mark of sadness there. Her countenance was bright and glowing with emotion; her eyes lustrous, as though just washed with tears. She might have been a messenger from heaven, such pure and heavenly light shone from her then. And was she not? Had she not just come from her place of prayer—from communion with her heavenly Father, to whose tender care she had been committing that dear one whose happiness was her life, and gaining strength for her task—had come to try and unravel the secret of his trouble, to get hold of the burden, and if she could not take it away, at least to share it with him.

Her husband raised his head and tried to put on a cheerful look; but she was not deceived by it. She came straight toward him, threw herself upon his lap, and clasping her arms about his neck, rested her face upon his breast.

"My dear, dear Caroline!"

She made no reply, but pressed her lips to his in silence. A tear had started from his eye and fell upon her cheek. There was no need for him to tell her now. The sluice was broken through; and their hearts, in sweet sympathy, flowed together. He was in trouble; and now he knew *that* secret was unfolded to her. And then she looked at him with such a meaning look.

"And it is for me—I know it is, dear husband! And you have been trying to hide it from me, because you feared to mar my happiness. But what do you suppose my earthly happiness is based upon?"

"Mine, dear Carrie."

And again she pressed his lips. "Thank you, dear. And now I do not ask you to enter into particulars—no; it may trouble you—but tell me if I am right. In some way you have become involved in difficulty—perhaps have met with losses—and you are sad because you think my comfort may be abridged, or that you will have to part with this place, which we thought was to be our home? Am I not right?"

"Yes, dear Caroline, you are right."

"And where do you think is my home—the only spot that can ever be home to me? It is not this house nor these grounds, much as I admire them. Do you think it is?"

"No, dear Carrie. I believe your home is in my heart—your happiness in my love. But, O my darling! that is the thorn that rankles in my breast; that——"

"I know it, I know it, dear husband. I know that I have been childish in my feelings. I have allowed myself to be too demonstrative. Life has been very joyous to me—it always has been; that you know. My childhood was happy. My parents' home was a happy home; but a thousandfold more happy has been my wedded home. And it has been your pleasure to see me light-hearted, to keep the smile on my face, and to make my life a pleasant summer day; and now you dread to think how care and poverty will trouble me, and fear lest I should droop and be sad. Is it not so?"

The husband only answered with a sigh.

"Yes, I know that is the thorn that has been causing your heart to ache. But only think how many good things we have

received at the hand of our heavenly Father. And shall we not be willing, if he appoints it so, to receive evil also? He is our Father still. No power can interpose between us and his love. His blessing, you know, can make us rich and happy, even when bending under a burden of care and walking in the lowly vale of poverty."

"Yes, dear Carrie, that is true. His blessing! But I fear this evil has come upon me for my worldliness."

"And mine, too—more than yours."

"I hope not. But I see now, as I have not seen before, how worldly *I* have been—not that I cared for wealth, or to riot in the luxuries of life, or to make a display in the world. *That* you know. But I fear I have taken a wrong view of life. I have been too anxious to avoid its cares and anxieties and uncertainties. I have wanted to throw off its burdens and be at rest, and make a holiday of my existence. I have sought to step aside from the toiling world, and, nestled in a quiet retreat, give myself up to enjoyment—just as if *enjoyment was the great end of my being. Here* has been my folly; and for this, God has met me and laid his hand upon me."

"And I have helped you thus to feel and act—I know I have. Oh! I see it now. I have been a snare to you. But, dear husband, I hope to prove a helper after this. You do not know how strong I feel—not in myself, but in our Father's grace. Before I came to seek you here, I had been with him; and he knows with what sincerity I asked his aid to assist me in holding up your hands and bearing your burdens. And oh! you cannot tell how very resolute I feel!"

"Dear, dear Carrie."

"And now, dear husband, one great burden is rolled off. I know it is. You will not, after this, feel obliged to put on a cheerful look when your heart is sad, because you fear to trouble me. I cannot help you in matters of business. If I could, I should wish to know all the particulars; but I feel ready to do anything, or to go anywhere, or to submit to any privation. You could not alarm me now by any change you may feel obliged to make; and I am going to be as happy as ever, no matter what comes. So let your mind be perfectly at rest on my account. Is it not a great relief to you that I know your secret—tell me now, is it not?"

"Yes, dear Carrie; you have certainly taken away much of the bitterness from the cup. Your bravery has given me new strength. How shall I ever be thankful enough that God has bestowed such a gift upon me? I feel as if I could bear anything now."

Just then a ring of the front-door bell was heard, and very

soon the servant announced the presence of the Rev. Dr. Ransom in the parlour. Mr. Sandford at once descended to welcome his visitor, and in a few moments was followed by his wife. The reverend gentleman was cordially received by them both; for to them, as well as to those who had been long under his pastoral care, he seemed like a father; and more especially was his noble form, and mild, bright countenance, welcome at this time when clouds were gathering over them —not that they intended to burden him with a revelation of their trials, but his presence seemed to inspire them with confidence. There was an air of kindness mingled with dignity and manly bearing that made one feel happier and stronger. But to-day there was an unusual seriousness on his countenance, and it was very evident to Mr. and Mrs. Sandford that his errand was of that nature, and very soon after the salutations were passed he turned toward them and asked:

"Have you heard any unpleasant news in reference to our young friend Mr. Roland?"

Both answered in the negative, and with manifestation of grief and surprise.

"What can it be, Dr. Ransom?" said Mrs. Sandford.

"There is a report that he is in danger of being plundered —for I can give it no other name—of his whole estate, and left even worse than penniless."

"O Dr. Ransom!" said Mrs. Sandford, clasping her hands in great distress, "how can that be?"

"It was supposed that his father left no will, and of course, as the only child, he became sole heir to the estate. But I learn from good authority that a will has been found, made before Donald was born, which bequeaths the whole estate to a cousin of Donald's of the same name. It seems that the parents of young Roland having been married many years without having any children, and hopeless of an heir, Mr. Roland, desirous that the property should remain in the family and bear the old name, made a will bequeathing it to the third son of his brother, who had been named after him. One year after this will is dated Donald was born."

"And that will was never destroyed?"

"So it appears."

"In whose keeping has it been?"

"There, my dear sir, is the mystery. It is, however, now in the possession of Mrs. Peabody, Donald's aunt. How long she has had it she does not say, nor can any one divine why. If she knew how matters stood, she should have concealed them for so long, and more especially as she is herself a

legatee ; that is, an annuity, chargeable on the whole estate, of two thousand dollars, is to be paid to her during her life. It is a mysterious affair."

"Do you believe, Dr. Ransom, that the will is genuine?"

"Well, Mr. Sandford, you know possibly that I am deeply interested in this dear youth. He is one of nature's noblemen —a warm-hearted, generous, out-spoken, sincere man. I know his whole heart—I love him. Many wild stories, you know, find their way to a clergyman's ear, and in most cases are allowed to remain there without comment at the time or any notice thereafter. But in this case I have gone so far as to make inquiry of Squire Chauncey. He informs me that he remembers drawing up such an instrument for Donald's father, and of being a witness to its execution, and that one of the witnesses beside himself is still alive. He has not seen this instrument, but he understands Lawyer Jones has seen it, and that the heir has been notified and requested to come on and take the proper steps to have it authenticated."

"How long, Dr. Ransom, since the death of old Mr. Roland?"

"About three years, sir."

Mr. Sandford sat apparently confounded, while his wife, overcome with the sad tidings, was obliged to give way to her feelings.

"I do not wonder, my dear madam, that your sympathies should be thus aroused. My own feelings have been much excited, and my object in calling here was to invite you, Mr. Sandford, to go with me and see this young man. It must be a severe blow to him. His mind is highly excitable. He is isolated in a great measure, and, perhaps, no other individual in the place beside ourselves would, under present circumstances, feel at liberty to intrude upon him."

"I would go, with pleasure," said Mr. Sandford, "if it was not that business of importance calls me away in another direction. But I hope you will go, sir, by all means, and perhaps he may feel more free to communicate with you alone than if I am present with you."

"I do not suppose that either of us can do more than manifest our friendly feelings, but in times of trouble it is often a great relief to hear the voice of sympathy."

"I wish I could see him," said Mrs. Sandford.

"Then do, madam; if Mr. Sandford cannot conveniently go with me, I know of no one more likely to be welcomed by Donald."

"What do you say, dear husband?"

"Go, by all means."

"And can I ride with you, Doctor Ransom?"

"Certainly, madam—with great pleasure to me."

And in a few minutes the Doctor and Mrs. Sandford were on their way, as they thought, to the house of mourning.

As they were driving up the beautiful avenue by which the house was approached from the east, Mrs. Sandford broke the silence that had been maintained for some time.

"How mysterious would be the Providence that should cause this dear friend to be deprived of his birthright, and give up this lovely abode to comparative strangers."

"And yet, my dear madam, we cannot tell what good may come out of even such a dispensation. If the happiness of life depended upon beautiful surroundings, it would indeed be sad to think that such a change should be allowed to take place. Thanks be to God, the mind has power to rise above such accompaniments—to burst the bonds of sense and its delights, and bask in joy and peace amid privation and the sterner realities of existence."

"But that requires a large amount of grace."

"And it is through such means that grace is imparted; we sometimes forget that Providence and Grace work together. Providences, as we term these vicissitudes of life, are designed to clear away obstructions in the channel of divine grace, that the stream may flow clear and fresh into the soul."

Mrs. Sandford did not reply; the thought just uttered had gone home to her own heart, and she was trying to gather consolation from it.

"We must keep in mind, my dear madam, that God is the Father, and we the children. He chastens in love."

"Oh! yes, I believe that—I know it."

Donald met his friends at the door, and received them with such a cheerful aspect, that Mrs. Sandford feared he had not yet heard the evil tidings which had brought them there. As the Doctor was taking his seat, he therefore remarked:

"I am glad to see, my dear sir, that evil tidings have not yet had power to cast you down."

"Not when I know they cannot cast me out of the hearts of my friends."

Mrs. Sandford looked at him a moment; she saw his bright eye glistening, as though moistened by a tear—her sympathies were intensely aroused, and she gave way to a flood of tears.

"Keep to that faith, Donald; true friendship has its source in heaven, and like true grace, grows and strengthens under pressure. We have come this morning, this warm-hearted

friend of yours and myself, to let you see that if we can give you only the assurance of our love, *that* is warmer toward you now than ever."

"And I thank you most cordially, my dear sir, and I think I can honestly say that I thank God, that the evil tidings you have mentioned have had a tendency to give me more confidence in His wise and righteous government. You both know all my heart—my wrong feelings and dark views of the ways of God. I have been feeling after Him in the dark. This dispensation has thrown light upon His dealings, strange as it may seem."

"Not at all strange to me, Donald. God's dispensations are suited to each of us as individuals—they meet our peculiar necessities, and very often we are enabled to see just why they are sent."

"It has been my misfortune, perhaps I ought to say my fault, that I have always taken only a general view of Divine Providence, and through that I thought I saw an arbitrary Ruler of the Universe sitting aloof from the creatures He had formed, and ruling them by certain laws, unchangeable and unfeeling. Now I think I have learned to view Him as attending to us as individuals, apportioning to each that joy or trial adapted to each particular case, and in that way discipling us, to the end we may better fulfil His designs in our creation. In my own case, His mercies touched me not; the bounties of His hand, so lavishly poured out to me, brought forth no gratitude; indeed, they were not regarded as a gift, but rather as the result of circumstance or chance —the legitimate consequence of fixed laws, and not by any special appointment; and with such views, no love nor confidence was excited. Now I feel that I have been under a special guardianship; that which has happened to me seems directed at the very circumstance in my life that should have warmed my heart, but which only hardened and blinded me. O sir! you cannot think what a relief it is to feel that I have a Father in heaven! You cannot imagine what I have suffered from feeling that I was part of a fatherless creation. A God I have always believed in, but He was a Being of might and law; the world had no beauty to me, life no meaning."

"And now, Donald, you can look up and say, My Father!"

"Yes, sir, in a certain sense. Yes, I can say it, for I believe it—I know it; but the childlike, obedient, loving spirit I dare not say I have. I am like one who has awakened to a consciousness of parental love, and who would delight to

bask in its smile, but who has a long distance yet to travel ere he can be at home."

"You will reach it at last, Donald—only press on. But allow me to ask you, have you had no intimations until within these few days of this matter about a will?"

"Well, sir, I have had threats, that some evil was pending over me, but in what shape it was to come I could not imagine, nor was I the least troubled; I merely regarded them as an ebullition of anger."

"Then it is an enemy has done this?"

"I am sorry to say it, but one of my nearest of kin; the instrument is in the hands of my aunt, Mrs. Peabody; and she, it seems, is the agent to bring it to light, and who is taking measures to have it executed."

"Do you believe it to be genuine?"

"I have little doubt of it, sir. My father made such a will, but supposed he had destroyed it. At least he told me it was destroyed, and I have no doubt he thought it was. It was while he was in his last sickness, and just before he died; he was taken down in robust health, as you well know, sir, and was in too much pain to attend to making any disposition of his property; he merely said to me, 'I leave no will; it is not necessary; all will of course be yours; only see and take care of your aunt;' and that injunction I have endeavoured faithfully to fulfil."

"Have you no clue to the how and why that this instrument escaped destruction?"

"I know nothing about it, sir, further than I have told you."

"Have you taken advice?"

"I have consulted Squire Chauncey; but he cannot say how a defence can be set up, for he has not seen the will, nor will my aunt allow him to see it; he remembers writing such an instrument for my father, but that was many years ago, and of course he can recall only the general tenor of it. Nothing can be done until my cousin comes on, when of course the will must be brought into the Probate Court, and we can get a copy of it."

"Are you intimate with this cousin?"

"I have never seen him. Unhappily, there arose a breach between our fathers, and since then the two families have had no communion whatever."

"They live in Virginia, I believe?"

"They do, sir; and I have little hope that my right and title can be sustained; it must be by a long and very expensive contest. An injunction will of course, be laid

against my use of any of the property, and to all intents and purposes I shall be helpless. I am not used to a life of dependence, and cannot well brook the idea, and shall, therefore, at once seek some employment by which I can earn my bread, and have already written to a friend in the city to endeavour to find me a situation."

"But you are not going to leave this beautiful place?" said Mrs. Sandford, "not until you know more about the matter?"

"I should not like to stay here until driven from it. I shall remain, of course, until my cousin comes on, and we have an opportunity to see if there be any chance for defence. No, Mrs. Sandford, I feel as if my share of the good things of this world had suddenly slipped from my grasp."

The Doctor had now risen to depart, and, taking the hand of Donald, merely said:

"You know how I feel toward you, and all I would say to you. You know in whom to trust; and you know, when my friendship can avail you, where to come."

"I do, sir."

"I came here," said Mrs. Sandford, "to try and comfort you, and instead I have been instructed and strengthened myself;" but this was spoken in a low voice, while the Doctor was passing into the hall. "Mary! have you seen her?"

"I have not. You know how we stand to each other—that precious bond must be broken."

"No, no! say not so."

"My dear friend, my sister, you must not hold up that idea. It tears my heart to think of it, but my honour must be maintained whatever else goes. A poor man, with nothing but his own hands to depend upon for support, is no proper suitor for such a lady. You must remember I am no longer Donald Roland, the owner of Roland Place."

"But you are Donald Roland still, and Mary loves you, and will continue to love you under whatever circumstances."

"But how dishonourable in me to continue attentions to a lady, with nothing to offer but my heart."

"And that a richer treasure than many a prince can offer."

"I thank you, but my duty is too plain."

Donald waited on his friends to their carriage, and then returning to his parlour sat down and let his feelings have vent. Mrs. Sandford had touched a tender point in Donald's heart.

CHAPTER XII.

IT was not often that Salmon Tigh had called upon Mrs. Peabody since the death of her husband. There had been some slight intimacy between their families before that event, for Mr. Tigh had married a sister of Mr. Peabody; but as Mrs. Peabody, after the death of her husband, had taken up her abode with her brother, Mr. Tigh would hardly have ventured to call upon her there, for between him and that gentleman there was a deadly feud. Old Mr. Roland had not hesitated, on a certain occasion, to denounce him as a miser and trickster, and Mr. Tigh was not the person likely to forget or forgive; his venom he could conceal and retain for years, but it never lost its malignity. Since Mrs. Peabody had, as we have seen, left Roland Place, and was living in a house of her own, there had been a renewal of former intimacy. Mrs. Peabody had called upon Mr. Tigh, and his gig had been seen once or twice standing at her door. In fact, although she disliked the man, she was willing to make use of his services; and she well knew he would be more than willing to enter into her plans, and would not be very likely to hesitate on account of either social or moral considerations, if any gain to himself or injury to the heir of Roland Place could be accomplished.

On the present occasion of a call from Mr. Tigh, Mrs. Peabody had invited him into a small room in a wing of the house, and far enough removed from those in general use to secure complete privacy. As soon as the gentleman was seated she drew from her pocket a bunch of keys, and, unlocking an old-fashioned escritoire, drew from one of its blind-drawers a package carefully wrapped up in an envelope, marked Old Bills; removing this, she withdrew from the middle of the

bundle a paper also inclosed in an envelope, and which had once been carefully sealed, the large wax seal with the impression deeply stamped and clearly defined, with the ribbon attached to it which had been bound around it, all now hanging loose from having been broken open. Keeping it in her own hands, she took a seat beside her confidant, and extracting the enclosed paper, carefully opened it, and spreading it out upon her lap—

"There, read that!"

Mr. Tigh fixed on his glasses, and, leaning over, looked eagerly at the document, reading in a slow, smothered tone word for word. It was of some length, but very clear in its details. As he came to the close he examined very minutely the signature, and those of the witnesses. He then straightened himself up, took off his glasses, and putting them in a steel case, replaced them in his pocket.

"It seems all right; but why did you break that seal?"

"It was broken before I got it."

"That was it, ha! Can't it be fastened up again?"

"Why, where's the use of that?"

"Well, it might tally better with the writing on the back of that cover that you have in your hands."

Mrs. Peabody turned the said cover, and read as follows:

"This last will and testament only to be opened in the presence of one or both my executors, namely, Jabez Laurence and Amos Kingsbury."

"You have never yet told me," said Mr. Tigh, "how this came into your hands."

"That's of no consequence; here it is, that is enough—but why not destroy this cover? This wax seal is broken and can't be mended."

"I am afraid about that cover, it might look queer," said Tigh. "Yes; I think the best way now is to put it out of the way. But another thing: why did you not bring the thing out when the old man died, and not leave it for near three years and say nothing about it?"

"Haven't I just found it?"

"Oh! ah! yes; well, that's the story, is it?" Somehow I understood from you the other day that you have had it a great many years."

"That is of no consequence; but if you want to know the reason why it wasn't brought out before, I can tell you. I had every reason to know that he loved my Cornelia, and would have married her if it hadn't been for some new-comers in the place, who have clear bewitched him, and turned him round. I should have been a fool indeed, so long as there

was a chance for my daughter to be mistress there, to have given any one else a chance—don't you see that?"

"Yes, yes, I see; let you women alone for deviltry when your minds are once worked up to the right point."

"And haven't I reason to be worked up? Think of me, mistress in that house so many years, and always looking upon it as my home, and then to have some young upstart of a Miss who can ride a horse and palaver about this and that, coming there in place of my own flesh and blood! No, I would rather die first or see him die."

"But if you say he was going to marry Cornelia, why not prosecute him? you'd get a good round sum, or she would."

"Because she's a fool, and won't let me."

"But are you sure he is going to be married?"

"That is the talk—or it has been; but I guess when she finds that Roland Place has slipped off his back, and that he has nothing but his knuckle-bones to live by, she will give him a slip, or I'll lose my guess."

"Who is she?"

"I don't know her, and don't want to. I hate the sight of her, even at a distance. Why, Tigh, it would kill me to see that young flirt a-strutting round in that house, and taking my place, and may be altering things to suit her notion, and using the very furniture I've taken care of so long. I can't, I won't—I'll do anything—I'll burn the whole concern up first."

"Hush! hush! don't speak so loud—it works you up too much! You must keep cool—the dogs! if you should talk so before some people, you would get singed yourself, instead of burning up other folk. Keep cool—keep your senses about you—get your story well settled in your mind, and stick to it through thick and thin; as well be killed for a sheep as a lamb. But I don't see as I can be of any use to you!"

"Tigh! what makes you say so? Where am I to get any one to help me if you don't? You know all about such business, and how the thing is to be managed, and what steps are to be taken. You shall have your pay out of it. Can't you ask your lawyer what is first to be done, and get him to manage it?"

"Yes, and the first thing he will want is a fee."

"Well, fee him then."

"But what if there should be a flaw, and the whole thing fizzle out? You see there must be a straight story told, as to how you have come by this instrument, and then why it has been so long withheld; for the principal would have nothing

to say; he probably has had no idea that there was any such will in existence."

"Of course he didn't until he was written to, for my brother would have nothing to do with that family; and why he should have left it to one of them is more than I can tell, without it was on account of the name; I suppose he wanted the estate to keep up its name."

"But what is it I hear about that other business—about his not being the son of old Roland after all."

"Well, I suppose that can be proved too, if I say the word."

"Well, I don't see but you would be better off to have such a fact established than to bother about the will; in the one case, if there is no heir, that is, no child to inherit, and no will, then you and your brother come in as joint heirs of the whole; in the latter case you get only the two thousand annuity."

"But suppose one person should be living who could come forward and swear that she was present at his birth, and stayed with his mother for several days after, and that she knew him to be the child of Mrs. Roland, and that there was no possibility of any exchange being made."

"Exchange! what about that?"

"Why, you see there were two births in that house the same night. One was that of parents who were servants—the father was a hostler and the mother a housemaid; they were both boys; the child of this woman was taken up into Mrs. Roland's room after the birth of her own child, as she wished to see it, and when it was taken back to its mother she took a notion that it was not her baby; she was positive, and made a great to do about it, and the doctor was sent for, and it took a long time to satisfy her, and, in fact, she has never been satisfied to this day."

"Is she living?"

"Yes, she is living."

"But her mere opinion, without any other testimony, would do no good."

"Yes, that is true; but if some one could testify that she saw the thing done—what then?"

"That would alter things mightily; but can that be done?"

"Yes, it might be done; money will do anything if one had it," and Mrs. Peabody gave Tigh a look which he seemed to understand, for in a few moments he replied:

"You don't mean to stand at trifles, I see. It would make his feathers fly, wouldn't it? to find out that he wasn't after all of such high blood as he thinks he is!" And the old

sinner chuckled with delight, and then after a minute's silence he resumed, "But what of that other boy, is he living?"

"No, he has been dead long ago."

"That will do—yes, I don't see, after all, but this would be the best trick of the two."

"Why not use both of them? if there should be a doubt about his being a child of my brother's, that would be against him if he contested the will."

"It will make a pretty kettle of fish at any rate. But, woman, it will want a long purse to manage this matter, that's the rub. He will fight hard before he will give in that he is base-born."

"That he will; but the first thing you do is to go and secure the services of Squire Chauncey; you know his name will go a great ways in the opinion of people; he is known to be such an upright, honest man; he is your lawyer, is he not?"

"Yes, he has done a good deal of business for me; but I tell you, woman, everything must be as straight as a die—your witnesses must understand their story."

"I will see to that; but the money you must see to. You shall have one thousand dollars, clear of all expenses, for your trouble, and for advancing the money. I shall want two hundred, though, right off."

"Yes, but supposing you should fail in accomplishing your views, where am I to look."

"Look to me."

"Ay, ay, that is well enough; but I thought you knew me better. You know that I never take a leap in the dark. I never do business without security."

"I thought you wanted to see that young fellow who has been lording it so long brought down as well as I did."

"I know I owe him a grudge—an old grudge and a new one. Why, he's been up into the hollow there and made a clean turn-up, enticing the men away from my work; and more than that, he has sent Busby and broken up Jaques, and that scamp, frightened to death I suppose, has cleared out and run away with more than twelve hundred dollars of my money. Yes, I owe him a grudge, but I can't afford to let my money go any more of it; revenge is sweet, but a man may pay too dear for it."

"What security do you want?"

"Well, something that will insure me against loss—a good name, or a mortgage, or something of that kind."

"I can't give you a name; but this house is mine, and ten acres of land—I can secure that to you."

"Well, well, that might do; but it must be done before I spend a dollar in this business—as for revenge, I can get that, I guess, without taking much pains about it; he is dreadful thick with a certain family not many miles off, and I've got a chain around them that any day I choose to say the word, I can give a squeeze upon them that will grind them to powder."

"Why don't you, then? who is it? them Sandford folks?"

"No matter who it is."

"I know it's them—I hate them—they have been the cause of all my trouble—upstarts! they are nothing else; but he thinks all the world of them, and they have turned his head clean round. I wish I had a screw on them, they would feel it pinch pretty quick. When do you want this deed?"

"As soon as you want the money; but I tell you it won't do to go to Chauncey to do that business. I will draw it out, and you ride over to my house and you can get it acknowledged there. It won't be best to let folks in this place know anything about matters between us. I will go to Chauncey and secure his services, and then you can call on him and tell him your story; but mind what I tell you, let it be a straight story; if there is a crack in it, he will find it out—he is as sharp as a needle, and as honest as the day; and see that your witnesses understand themselves. And about this will, had you not better burn the cover?"

"Well, I need not show that, I can keep it safe. I don't like burning up things."

"Hark!" said Tigh, manifesting much alarm, "is anybody in that next room? that window is on a crack."

Mrs. Peabody looked up towards a small window that opened into a room adjoining—it was the only means of light to that apartment, which was used as a store-room for old furniture and rubbish of different kinds—it was on a crack.

"Did you hear anything there?" looking at Tigh.

"I thought I did."

"Rats probably; there is nobody at home but Jim, and he is lying down in the parlour—he is not well."

"I suppose he knows all about this business?"

"He knows something about it; but he is dreadful still lately; I don't know what's come over him."

"He hates Donald, though?"

"Well, he has been dreadful bitter, but—whether it's because he don't feel well, or what not, I can't tell—but he says nothing."

"But you will want his help."

"Oh! well, he'll be ready enough to help, no danger of

that. I can trust Jim; he has been treated bad enough, poor fellow—to think how he was turned off—and George too. Oh! it grinds my very soul to think how I and my family have been abused; but I will be up to him."

"Well, the sooner you are about this business the better, for, as you say the folks in Virginia have been written to, there is no telling how soon they may be here; and then, too, this report about his birth having got about, you must have everything ready, for it is likely Roland will be for starting a search and tracing it up to its source, and if it comes back to you, you will find yourself in business pretty quick."

"What can he do?"

"You would find, may be, unless you can prove what you have said, that somebody would have to suffer. I tell you *what*—it's no trifling matter; a man like Roland would care less to have his property taken away than to have his name blasted."

Mrs. Peabody had not thought, when, to gratify her ill-will, she had started this report, of the consequences that might result from it; nor did she indulge the idea of doing more by it than for the time injuring the standing of Donald in the circle of friends he had formed; but when Mr. Tigh suggested that it would avail her more to substantiate it as a fact than the bringing forth of the will, she readily entered into it.

There was, indeed, a foundation for it in the facts already stated; for the woman, for a long while, could not be brought to believe but she had been cheated, and was more persistent in her belief as the child began to develop, and his hair showed signs of being red, a colour to which she had a great antipathy—she having been cruelly treated when a child by a woman to whom she had been bound out, and who unfortunately had fiery red hair; and even to the day of the death of her son she never truly owned him. It was an unfortunate circumstance; but no one who knew Mrs. Roland had ever a moment's distrust that she was privy to such a foul deed; nor, indeed, could it have been done without connivance on the part of those about her, and no possible motive could be assigned for such an act on their part. Mrs. Peabody was too eager for revenge on young Roland to calculate judiciously what consequences might ensue either to him or herself from the measures suggested by her malice. And Tigh, perfectly indifferent as to anything but his own interest, did not take much pains to inquire into results either; he meant to keep on the safe side; if Roland should lose his estate or his name, it would certainly gratify a species of resentment he

indulged against the young man; and yet, rather than risk a dollar, he would have been satisfied to indulge his dislike and cherish it in his own breast.

He lost no time, however, in calling on his lawyer, and engaging his services; but, as we shall see, in a way that might lull all suspicion against himself.

Squire Chauncey was an old inhabitant of Woodburn, a lawyer by profession, although not entirely dependent on that for a living. He had, by industry and prudence, through a course of years, produced a good farm and homestead, and by wise management had made it very productive, and by good taste in embellishment had surrounded himself with such ornaments as nature can be made to produce. His home was distinguished for its neat and comfortable appearance—everything around it was in good order, and had a look of thrift. Very much in contrast with his home was the office in which the Squire attended to his regular business. The place he occupied for this purpose was an upper room in an old building that had once been a store. The store was now closed, its owner having removed to a more central position, and the lower portion of the building was used for storage; and at the time we are treating of, was rented to Mr. Norseworthy, where his bags of cotton waste and bales of batting found a temporary resting-place ere they went to the mill or to the market.

The Squire's office was a cold, bare room, much larger than was necessary; it had a dingy look, as though seldom swept, and the long table in its centre, covered with green baize, with two or three wood-bottomed chairs, and an old book-case rather dusty, comprised all its articles of furniture.

He was himself a fair-sized man, somewhat inclined to corpulence, with a smooth, mild face. His hair thin, but sufficient to cover his fore-top, on which it lay carefully combed down. His aspect was serious, and of that peculiar cast which might be called stationary. His features did not seem to have been formed either for laughter or for the exhibition of angry feelings; an honest man or a rogue could not have discerned any signs that indicated pleasure or displeasure at any communications he might be making to him. He was a man of strict integrity, never giving counsel that his judgment or his conscience did not approve; and it was said he had done much by his judicious advice to prevent litigation in his native town; and so notorious was this, that those who were bent upon revenge through the law, whether with or against justice, were more apt to engage the services

of the other man of law which Woodburn sustained, than risk the counsel of Squire Chauncey.

He was a keen lawyer, well read, and although not gifted as an orator, seldom lost a case. He had a clear mind and a lucid way of stating his case, and a serious, impressive manner than had more weight than much noisy declamation.

Such was the man to whom Salmon Tigh was about to make application for the benefit of Mrs. Peabody. Mr. Tigh had employed Squire Chauncey in his own business, for the reason that he knew him to be peculiarly careful in his researches into titles, and skilful in drawing up papers or bonds of agreement; and perhaps conscious that the public in general looked upon himself with rather a suspicious eye, he felt that his cause would be strengthened by having such an honest agent to plead for him. Some of Mr. Tigh's business went through other hands; but still there was a good deal of it that an honest man could conscientiously manage, and that portion was committed to the care of Squire Chauncey.

"Good morning, Squire—or I don't know but it is afternoon—time flies so with me, I can hardly keep the run of it—pretty well to-day?"

"Quite well, I thank you, sir; take a seat, Mr. Tigh."

And Mr. Tigh helped himself to a seat, and placed his chair up to the long table, and in close proximity to that of the Squire, who sat as usual in his large arm-chair.

"I have called to-day for no business of my own; it is a matter I have nothing to do with; and do not wish to have anything to do with; but sometimes, you know, when a man has relations, and they think he knows a little more about the world or about business than they do, why, he is likely to be called upon, and set to work whether he will or no."

The Squire did not reply; he merely raised his eyebrows a little—it was something new to him that Salmon Tigh should be brought to engage in anything against his will or his interest. As no further heed was given to Mr. Tigh's introduction, after a moment's pause he proceeded:

"My cousin, Mrs. Peabody——"

"Is Mrs. Peabody your cousin?"

"Not exactly; but as I married Mr. Peabody's sister, it brings us into a kind of relationship, and sometimes we call each other cousin; at least we did so in days that are past. For many years, though, for one cause or another, we have not been intimate; of late, however, our acquaintance has been renewed; and as her boys, you know, are not much

to be relied upon, and she has no other male friend whom she feels like going to, she has called upon me. You know, I suppose, there are hard feelings between her and her nephew?"

"I know nothing of it, sir. I only know that some time since I drew up some papers for her nephew, by which he made, as I thought, a handsome settlement upon her. He certainly never intimated that there was any hostile feeling between them."

"Well, there is, for all that; and it seems that Mrs. Peabody, perhaps, in an unguarded moment, gave out that he was not her nephew—that he was not the son of Mr. and Mrs. Roland."

"A very serious charge; and especially coming from such a source."

"But she says it is true, and that it can be proved; and that witnesses are living that can testify to it as a fact."

"Why has she kept this fact so long unrevealed?"

"I asked her that same question."

"What answer did she give?"

"Well, Squire, I cannot say that she gave me a direct answer. It may be that fear of her brother during his life may have shut her mouth, or some other reason I cannot just say what; but you know when women take offence—and they take offence sometimes for strange causes—they don't think of consequences. The probability is, she knew the fact, if, as she says, it is a fact, and in a moment of anger blurted it out; and, finding the report has got circulated about, she seems determined to substantiate it. Whether she wishes you to prosecute the matter against Donald Roland, and eject him as the rightful heir to her brother's property, I cannot say, or whether she wishes you to defend her in case she should be sued for defamation, I declare I cannot tell you, Squire."

While Mr. Tigh was thus speaking, Squire Chauncey was busy making figures on a piece of paper that was lying before him. They were somewhat in the form of hieroglyphics, for the mind of the good man certainly did not direct his pencil; he was deep in thought; and when Mr. Tigh ceased speaking, there was no reply; and when the latter said:

"You understand me, Squire?"

Awaking as from a reverie, the Squire replied:

"What, sir?"

"I say, you understand what I have just been telling you?"

"I do, sir; I believe I comprehend the case fully."

There was something in the tone of voice or the manner that rather affected Mr. Tigh unpleasantly; he feared, he could hardly tell why, however, that the Squire did not approve of the business, and if he did not, he knew they would get no help from him; he was therefore much surprised when the gentleman asked:

"And she wishes me to undertake this business of defence or prosecution, or whatever it may be, for her?"

"By all means, Squire; and I am empowered to leave you a fee."

And Mr. Tigh drew forth his pocket-book, and was about to extract some bills.

"No occasion for that, Mr. Tigh—not in the least."

"You had better take it, Squire; a bird in the hand, you know."

"I prefer not, sir. Please send Mrs. Peabody to me as soon as you can, and it will be necessary for her to bring her witnesses, that I may be able to judge as to the nature of their testimony; or she can come herself first; but there had better be as little delay as possible."

Mr. Tigh replaced his pocket-book, but too glad that he had not been obliged to draw upon its contents, saying as he did so:

"I wish you to understand, Squire, that this is a matter I have nothing to do with; I have merely come to do an act of kindness for Mrs. Peabody, and am no ways implicated whatever."

Squire Chauncey made no reply; he did not even nod his head; he was writing, and Mr. Tigh, having done his errand, and knowing that the Squire had in general few remarks to make one side of business, took his hat and departed.

It was perhaps about two hours after the interview thus recorded, when Squire Chauncey's office was entered by a person of a very different character to that of Salmon Tigh. The visitor was received with somewhat more courtesy, for the Squire rose from his seat, and advancing gave his hand in a very cordial manner.

"Mr. Roland, I am happy to see you." It was Donald—not as we have been wont to see him, with a clear, bright, healthful countenance, but pale and careworn; his eye had a hollow look, and his cheek was sunken; and as he took the chair which had been placed for him by the Squire near to himself, he seemed to settle in it as though the languor which his countenance indicated, was physical as well as mental.

"I have come to see you, Squire Chauncey, for the purpose of getting your advice, and obtaining also your services in reference to a very unpleasant rumour that is afloat respecting me, and which is of such a serious nature as seems to me should demand my attention; in fact, coming as it does in connection with another event of which you are cognizant, has a very important bearing upon my material interests, and if not stopped will be destructive to my standing in society. I suppose, sir, you have heard the purport of the rumour to which I allude."

"I suppose I know, Donald, to what you allude; but I must be frank with you, and let you know at once that as to giving you counsel and rendering you service in reference to it, my hands are tied."

"Has my aunt applied to you, sir?"

"She has—not more than two hours since, through her agent, Mr. Tigh."

"And you have decided to assist her?"

"I have undertaken the case."

Donald arose, bowed politely,

"Good afternoon, Squire Chauncey," and left the room.

Immediately the Squire dashed down his pen, arose, and walked the room. Never in all his practice had he met with such an untoward circumstance; he loved Donald; he would have served him against any odds with no other fee than the pleasure of befriending one whose father had been one of his best friends and benefactors; and now that youth, almost broken-hearted from an accumulation of trials, has gone from his presence with the assurance that he, Squire Chauncey, was engaged to use all his knowledge and ability as a lawyer for his destruction.

To Donald this was almost the crowning item in his list of trials. He had such confidence in the skill and integrity and friendship of Mr. Chauncey that he felt secure in having the best done for him that law and justice could do; the fact that this old friend of his family had forsaken him was a blow he could not have anticipated; his heart sank within him, and as though forsaken by all the world, at least by all who could afford material aid, he went on his way toward home. He had just passed the road through his woods that led to his favourite retreat, when a sudden turn in his mind caused him to rein round his horse; he entered the road, and was at once amidst the dense forest, lost to the sight of man or human habitations; he gave the rein to Hunter, and allowed him to walk. It was the opening of spring, and the birds were in full glee, chirping, and singing, and flying from bough to bough;

the air was fragrant with the aroma from opening buds, and he let the soothing influence of nature do its appropriate work; he opened his heart to take in the wholesome lesson —*God was there;* he believed in Him; He seemed near at hand; he could see it in the renewal of life on every bush and every tree-top; he could hear His voice in every carol or chirp of the happy birds. "Yes, it is so; it is an everlasting truth—*God is love.*" He spoke it aloud, for no human ear was within his reach; his heart glowed with strong emotion; and strength seemed to be imparted from the words he had uttered; the feeling of loneliness died away; his trials had not come upon him for any wrong he had done to his fellow-man; nor, as far as he could see, from any false step in the conduct of his affairs. No, it was from above. The hand of heaven was dealing with him, and he believed in Almighty *wisdom*, and *power*, and LOVE, and again speaking aloud:

"*I cannot see, but I will trust.*"

Having reached his favourite alcove, he dismounted, and fastening Hunter, entered the sacred spot—to him now a Bethel. Once, indeed, a nursery for dark and gloomy thoughts to which, in moments of despondency, he had resorted in order as it would seem to indulge a spirit of isolation and almost to riot in despair. Now to commune with God, to worship in this Temple made by Omnipotence, unpolluted by the hand of man. Here he had found peace, and if no vision of angels ascending and descending had been vouchsafed, yet sweet assurance had come in whispering thoughts from the source of truth. He walked to the edge of the cliff, leaned over the cedar bough, and breathed in with delight the fresh air from the bright, blue river; God was about him; those everlasting hills that rose on every side were but tokens of his power to defend his children; that rolling beauteous river, an emblem of eternal life and peace, for ever flowing, yet for ever full. Awhile he gazed, drinking in rich consolation from mountain and tree and river, and then as he left the spot and paced back and forth the smooth, clean pavement of rock, again he spake:

"Yes, I *will* trust."

And bowing there alone with God, he committed himself with a childlike confidence to his heavenly father.

Scarcely had he risen from his knees, when his horse whinnied, and stepping from the inclosure, to his surprise he saw Mary Herbert. She was reining her horse around as about to return. He walked quickly toward her.

"Please do not go away," he said, as he came up to her.

"I did not perceive," she said, "that any one was here

until I came suddenly upon your horse. I am sorry to intrude upon you."

He saw that she was very pale; the rich colour had left her cheek, and from appearance she had been weeping.

"You are no intruder; please let me assist you to dismount."

And he took her hand for that purpose. She at first hesitated, but, seeing his earnest look and noticing the great change that had taken place in his once bright and sparkling countenance, and, perhaps, moved by pity, in a few moments yielded to his request.

"I suppose," she said, as they entered the place, and as Donald was leading her to a seat, of which, since it had become a favourite resort not only to him and her but some of their more intimate friends, he had taken pains to have several erected, "I ought to feel somewhat disturbed since receiving that letter from you, at being caught in the act of visiting a place that derives all its interest to me from the fact of its connection with our first acquaintance; but I have never been trained in a conventional school, nor am I ashamed to acknowledge that my heart does not easily change. You have known that I loved you——"

She was going to say more, but her sensations were too powerfully aroused by the very utterance of the words she had been speaking. She sat down and hid her face, her whole frame convulsed with the outburst of feeling.

Donald stood silently by, still holding her hand, while his heart suffered intense agony. As soon as her excitement had somewhat been relieved by weeping, he took a seat beside her.

"Mary, how could I do otherwise, as a man of honour, than release you from an engagement which had been of my own seeking?"

"That engagement, as you call it, was not entered into by proxy, but your own lips told me that you truly loved me; and without guile I accepted your love and gave you the assurance that my heart was yours. I did it with all candour and truth."

"And, dear Mary, has it not been the richest source of consolation to me, the belief that you knew no guile, and that God had permitted me to win the affection of an honest heart? I wrote to you, and requested her who is a mutual friend to be the bearer of the letter. How could I see you and say the words to you which that letter conveyed?"

"And you really thought Mary Herbert would feel that it was all satisfactory? O Donald! you forgot that I had given

you my heart! 'Release me from my engagement!' yes, you would release me from my engagement. I know nothing of any engagement. You asked for my love—I had loved you, and I freely told you so. Do you wish that withdrawn? if so Mary Herbert will not trouble you with reproach. She may not be able to comply with your request, but no human ear will ever hear a murmur of complaint. Say, Donald, is that your wish?"

"How can I say it, Mary?"

"And yet you wish it?"

"I wish we had never met."

"I cannot feel so, Donald; for in you I have seen the highest type of manhood, and what pains me most in this terrible hour is the thought that you have no true understanding of what is meant by woman's love."

"Do not judge me harshly."

"I do not wish to; but is it not the truth that, for the paltry reason that, in all likelihood, your property would be taken from you and yourself reduced to poverty, the woman who you thought loved you would be unwilling to share poverty with you?"

"More than that—disgrace."

"How disgrace! does honour go with property?"

"I fear you have not heard; but I must tell you, Mary. There is a vile attempt, and it may prove successful, to blast my name!"

"By laying to your charge wrong, injustice, or meanness?"

"No, not these; but by proving I am base born—a child of menials!"

And, overpowered by the sickening thought, he hastily rose and paced the rock; his face swollen with emotion and his eye flashing with fury. Mary saw his agitation, and, springing from her seat, caught his arm.

"Donald, dear Donald, you cannot, as you think, drive me from you. It is yourself that I love and have loved, not your fine place or your respectable name and lineage. Do you not credit this, Donald?"

He made no reply, he merely clasped the hand that rested on his arm, and covered his face.

"Only let me feel that your love to me is unchanged, and no circumstance that could possibly befall you shall tear me from you. I would go with you, Donald, with a light and joyful heart, down into the lowest valley of humiliation, and feel I had a richer treasure in your noble character and true heart than any prince could give me."

Donald could not stand this, he threw his arm around her and clasped her to his breast.

"My own dear Mary."

"And my own dear Donald, now and for ever! O Donald! let me prove to you that my love is stronger even than death—believe that you have one friend who will cling to you, let what may come. Don't you believe I will?"

"May God bless you, Mary!"

"But don't you believe me?"

"Yes, oh! yes. I know you now as I have never before, although I have had the most exalted ideas of your truthful character. O! how quickly I would barter property or station to win the love of such a heart. But, Mary, how can I bear to drag you down with me? Your friends would reproach me; your brother would feel that I was unworthy of his confidence; my own heart would condemn me."

"Who are my friends that you think so meanly of? My sister would scorn me should I allow such influences as you have named to weigh a moment with me. Willie, I know, will glory in my choice. And our dear Doctor—think of it, Donald—Dr. Ransom, when I showed him your letter, sat down and wept. 'Mary,' he said, 'prove yourself a true woman. Donald is a true man; base born or noble born, he has a heart unsullied and above reproach!' No, Donald, we all love you more than ever. Oh! how glad I am that I came here, and that you did not let me go back. I know you will feel stronger. I think our heavenly Father has sent me."

Donald could not help it, as he withdrew his arm and met her lovely face turned up to him as if to see whether her words of comfort had the desired effect—for the first time he pressed his lips to hers.

"Yes, dear Mary, your heavenly Father I believe has sent you."

"Say *our*, dear Donald."

"Yes, our Father—blessed privilege! And here, dear Mary, where, I believe, love first sprang into my heart, I renew my pledge; to you and to my Saviour may I ever prove loyal and true."

"But I must return home. You will go with me? Do not, as you have lately, keep from your friends. We will all cling to you, no matter what comes. Oh! that dear Willie were here! You would learn then what a noble heart he has. And who knows but all this trouble that has come upon you is to assure you that there is such a thing as true friendship, aside from all worldly or selfish considerations. Besides, suppose it true what your fears anticipate, and your all is

swept away. I am not poor. It is no great fortune to be sure, but enough to keep us in comfort, or for you to start in business with."

Donald stopped. They were walking arm in arm. He released his arm, and taking her hands in his, looked her steadily in the face for a moment.

"Mary!"

"What, Donald?"

"Do you think I could do that?"

"Are not our interests one? Would property—would life be any thing to me without you? Donald, you cannot seem to realize what you have done in winning my heart. Do you not know that you have bound me to you? You may withdraw your love; but nothing short of that can tear asunder the chain that unites us; and I have no fear that you will do that, or that you can do it. Your own heart is too pure and true."

"No, Mary, I cannot do that; I cannot withdraw my love. I thank you for that expression of confidence in the strength of my affection. I thank you too for this renewed assurance of your unselfish love; but in pity to me let that other subject drop. Remember I have been nurtured in independence. To this hour of my life no human being, except my parents, has ever done a favour for me without abundant compensation. I have been trained to feel that I was above all exigencies of fortune. The idea of dependence is entirely new to me. The thought chills me. It seems to strike away the very foundation of manhood. What I may come to, I know not; but, if it is right to make such a prayer, I will constantly petition God to spare me that ordeal or take me from the world. Some honest calling I intend to seek, and feel sure to find. Spare me, dear Mary. Let me feel myself a man, although stripped of all but my strength and my reason."

Mary Herbert looked fixedly at him as he thus spoke. His eye sparkled with a brilliance she had never witnessed before, and his whole countenance assumed a beauty that thrilled her heart; for it gave expression to that peculiar feeling which was no doubt one of the richest traits of his mind. Almost she regretted what she had said; for she admired that very principle her words had so keenly touched. It had been a prominent item in her father's instructions; and she well knew how his dear life had been sacrificed on that bitter altar. As he paused, she said, while the tears dripped from her long, dark lashes:

"Dear Donald, pardon me. I did not think. Charge it to my love. Believe me, I would not do one act or say one

word to injure your noble feelings. It was woman's weakness that for the moment got the better of Mary Herbert's judgment. And to assure me of your pardon, you will now accompany me home, so that Julia may know that that naughty letter had not its desired effect. But more than that —I must tell you that our friend Bradford is in trouble; and I have no doubt, but for the fear of adding to your trials, he would have called upon you; although, he is so much like yourself, it is possible his delicacy of feeling might have prevented him."

"Bradford in trouble! For what cause?"

"Well, I am so little versed in business matters that I do not clearly apprehend; but so far as I can understand from Aunt Katy, it has something to do with his brother's business."

"Which brother—not David?"

"Yes, his brother David. You know he has been employed at a cotton-mill in the east part of the town; and it appears he has lost a great deal of money."

"And I suppose Joseph has, as usual, put his neck in to bear part of the burden. That noble fellow will ruin himself yet in trying to help others. Well, if he does, he will have the comfort of feeling that he has sacrificed himself in his efforts to cherish brotherly affection."

"Aunt Katy says she fears he is going to lose home and all this time; but I cannot give you particulars."

"If that is the case, I must see him, and will go there at once."

CHAPTER XIII.

ON Donald's return home after the interview with Miss Herbert, related in a previous chapter, he found a letter waiting for him; and on opening, read as follows:

"My Dear Young Friend: Although my duty as a counsellor-at-law might be a sufficient apology for my refusal to attend to your case, yet, situated as we are to each other on the score of old friendship, I cannot suffer you to have the impression that it was from indifference to you or your interests that I accepted the duty of leading the contest against you. The case itself is one of intense interest to you—in my estimation a thousandfold more than the circumstance of the will. You may, indeed, by means of that, be deprived of your property; but you are yet young, and may be able to retrieve your fortune by industry and skill. But to have it proved that those you have revered and loved as parents are indeed aliens to you by blood; that no tie binds you to them but the mere circumstance of education and support; and that your lineage is to be traced through parents far down in the social circle, with whom you cannot now associate nor render respect—is, in my estimation, one of the most terrible misfortunes that could possibly befall you. As soon as application, therefore, was made to me to take up the case, I accepted the duty, and for this reason—as their counsel, I shall, of course, be made acquainted with all the grounds on which this charge is made. I shall sift the evidence thoroughly. I shall seek for the truth; and, whether it be for or against you, the truth shall come out if I can find it. And it is time this matter was settled, and settled for ever. It is not a new story, although you may never have heard of it before. It was broached in your childhood; but for many years nothing has been heard of it. Now it must be settled.

It is in my hands; and if it can be established as truth I shall do it. Justice demands it; and you yourself would not be willing to wear a false pretence through life. I advise you to seek the counsel and aid of Hanson of Bloomville—an honourable and expert practitioner. He will do all for you that can be done.

"Your friend as ever,

"JAMES CHAUNCEY."

Although this letter relieved Donald's mind from some very unpleasant impressions as to the conduct of one whom he had always esteemed a friend, yet there were things in it that caused very sad reflections. He could not but feel that he was placed in a very precarious situation. All that was desirable in life seemed to be hanging on a poise. But his duty was plain. He must not let all go by default. He must defend himself and his property by all lawful means; and he must make preparation for it without delay.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. SANDFORD had been relieved from a terrible incubus by the resolution of his lovely wife, in her effort to get out the secret that was preying upon his mind. We may call it weakness if we please, but it had been a very serious obstacle in his way. He had good judgment as a business man; but the desire to keep from her knowledge the situation of his affairs prevented his taking such steps as prudence dictated. Now she knew all—at least she was prepared for the worst; and the way was clear for him to take immediate measures in arresting things where they were; and his first step was to call on Mr. Bradford, that they might consult and act together, for they were alike implicated.

Joe Bradford knew but little about business one side of farming. He had purchased a share in the mill and taken the deed in his own name, designing, as soon as the note he gave for it was paid, which, from the glowing representations of Norseworthy, would not be long, to give it to his brother. All the danger he apprehended was from having to pay the note before receipts would be coming from the mill, or at the worst to pay the note; he would have at any rate his quarter of the mill property so that the loss could not be much; and when he found that a great loss had been sustained, he had made up his mind to take measures for paying his note, and and then disposing of his share on the best terms he could, and was preparing to visit a friend whom he knew had means, in order to that end, when Mr. Sandford made his call. After a few moments spent in lamentations over the result of this late examination, Mr. Sandford said:

"And I have come to consult with you, Mr. Bradford, as to the course we had better take in regard to our interests there."

"My course I have resolved upon already," said Bradford. "I shall have nothing more to do with the concern, but shall sell my quarter for what I can get."

"That is my determination likewise, Mr. Bradford; and if it were only the loss of what our shares have cost us, it would be comparatively of little consequence; but you know we are responsible for all that amount of debt which appears against the concern!"

"How so, sir?" said Bradford. "I had nothing to do with the running of the mill. I merely bought a quarter for my brother's benefit."

"Was the deed drawn in his name?"

"No, sir, in my name; but he was to have all the benefit from it. The fact of my merely owning a part of the establishment surely does not compel me to run it unless I choose!"

"Have you the deed on hand?"

"Yes, sir."

"You had better get it and look over its conditions."

Bradford at once stepped from the room, and in a few moments returned, and handed Mr. Sandford the paper—

"There it is, sir; you can read it."

After running his eye over it, Mr. Sandford handed it back, saying:

"I perceive, sir, it is an exact copy of the one I have. If you will read it carefully, you will see that you are entitled to one quarter of all the profits, and of course implicated in its losses. If there is an understanding between you and Mr. Norseworthy, that your brother and not yourself is to share in the profit or loss, and you have a writing to that effect, such an agreement might screen you from all responsibility, so far as Mr. Norseworthy is concerned."

"I have such a writing, sir."

"Then Mr. Norseworthy must look to your brother and not to you; but of course that writing is not on record."

"No, sir."

"Your deed being on record, though, should Mr. Norseworthy not be able to pay these debts against the mill, the creditors come upon you or me or on both of us for every dollar that is owing."

Poor Bradford was almost unmanned. He settled back in his chair as though struck by a blow.

"It is a very serious affair," continued Mr. Sandford; "but we must look it in the face and see what had best be done. My confidence in Mr. Norseworthy has been very much shaken of late—not that I think him designedly dis-

honest—but I think him visionary in his schemes and careless in the management of business; and more than all, I fear he is under the power of a man of no principle—I mean Tigh—do you know him?"

"I know him in a certain way. He has the reputation of being very rich. He called on me a day or two since to inquire if I had a yoke of oxen for sale. I was not in the house at the time, and when he was asked to walk in and its down, he inquired if the young ladies—the Misses Herbert—were in, and the girl called them; and when I came in I found him in lively conversation with them. They, apparently amused with his quaint manners and his style of conversation, it was some time before I could introduce the subject of the oxen, as he was telling some long-winded story about how he had got along up in the world; and when he went with me to look at the cattle, he put a great many questions to me about Miss Mary, and I suspected that his main errand was to see them. He bought the oxen, though, and said he would call in a day or two with his man and take them. That is all I know about him, except that he is said to be very rich."

"He is probably a moneyed man, but I hear has not been particular as to the manner of making it. To be candid with you, I will say he holds some of my notes, and I have some acquaintance with him. He is very plausible, and for some time I was of the opinion that he was quite an open-hearted, obliging person; but of late I learn from good authority that he is unrelenting in his grasp when once he has the power; that he will use any means, no matter how low, to accomplish his ends. Now I have reason to fear that Mr. Norseworthy is largely indebted to this man; that, in fact, he is his banker. He doubtless holds all the notes that have passed from us to Mr. Norseworthy. This would be of little moment to us, as we intend to pay our notes; but the question is, what security has Mr. Norseworthy given this Mr. Tigh? and is it not likely that all Mr. Norseworthy's property is in some way in this man's power; if so, what security have we that these debts of the concern will be paid? I have already given my note to Mr. Norseworthy for nearly my share, which I much regret, for I am still responsible for the whole amount of this indebtedness. It is a serious matter for us both."

The conversation was here interrupted by a call for Mr. Bradford; he was but a few minutes absent. As he came into the room, Mr. Sandford noticed that he was very pale, and when he attempted to say something as he handed a paper to him, he could scarcely speak.

Mr. Sandford looked over the paper.

"It is just what I have been fearing."

In a low and trembling voice Bradford replied:

"This is the first time in my life that I have been sued. It will be my ruin. They must take the property." And taking his seat, he leaned his head upon his hand—the tears did not come—he felt too desperate for any such relief; his heart seemed paralyzed.

"Has the man gone?" said Sandford.

"Mr. Busby? yes, sir, and I believe has gone to your house."

"Mr. Bradford, do not despond, we have neither of us done anything intentionally wrong. I must go home at once. I shall immediately apply to Squire Chauncey and put this affair into his hands. Had you not better send for your friend Roland?"

"Donald has trouble enough of his own. I don't wish to burden him with any of mine."

"Shall I not, then, request the counsel and aid of Mr. Chauncey for you too?"

"Perhaps you had better, sir; but I don't see what he can do?"

"He cannot, of course, prevent our property from being attached, but he can advise us as to what measures shall be taken to prevent Norseworthy from implicating us any farther, and in securing the mill property—that may be wrested from our grasp—for how do we know whether there may not be a much larger amount of indebtedness than Norseworthy has revealed to us?"

"You must do what you think best, sir."

Mr. Sandford lost no time in calling upon Mr. Chauncey, and making a full *exposé* of their difficulties.

"You and Mr. Bradford, sir, are indeed placed in a very unpleasant situation, and, as I think, a very dangerous one. The concern ought to be stopped instanter."

"Can it be done, Squire?"

"Certainly, sir. An injunction can be obtained; and Mr. Norseworthy can be made to give in a strict account of his past business."

"Can it be done soon? I fear, if it should get noised abroad that legal measures have been taken against Mr. Bradford and myself, Mr. Norseworthy may either take some unwarrantable measures himself to put his property out of his hands or his creditors may seize it; for it would not surprise me if he is very largely indebted."

"There is no doubt of his being largely indebted; but I think his creditors are not very numerous. He has not for

some time been in very good repute among our people in general—I mean as to credit. I think almost all he owes is due to one individual; but that person is a shrewd man, and will not readily lose his money, if any legal means can secure it."

"I presume I know to whom you refer—Mr. Tigh?"

"Yes, sir. In some way Norseworthy has influence with that gentleman; and it would not be strange if he owes quite a large sum in that quarter."

"Then, no doubt, he must hold some claim on Norseworthy's property. He surely, if so keen a man as represented, would not loan a large amount without security?"

"True, sir; but Mr. Tigh is a very singular man. He keeps a strict watch over his affairs, and is careful to whom he lends. I have no doubt, Mr. Sandford, you could procure a large amount of money from him, if you needed it, without any additional security to your own name. He would know that a person of your standing and connections would be very jealous of the honour of your name. He would not be very likely to lend in the same way to Mr. Norseworthy. He doubtless holds a mortgage on all Mr. Norseworthy's property; but he may not have put it on record. Such a proceeding would have prevented Mr. Norseworthy from obtaining sufficient credit to carry on his business. But he can put it on record at any moment, should he be suspicious of danger. Norseworthy, no doubt, pays him a heavy premium for all his favours; and Mr. Tigh takes that into account. He has become rich by such means, and he can afford to run some little risk with a good customer. But, Mr. Sandford, if Mr. Tigh should learn what you know about the situation of that mill concern, he would not lose many hours in placing himself in a secure position."

"Then we had better proceed at once, Squire Chauncey."

"I should thus advise you, sir, to go to Mr. Norseworthy's with power to stop all further proceedings, and with an attachment ready to be laid on his property. If everything can be satisfactorily arranged, no harsh measures need be used. Of course, you have no desire to injure that gentleman. All you want is a fair adjustment of affairs, and sufficient guarantee that you shall not be made responsible for what Mr. Norseworthy is justly bound to pay."

"And you, sir, will have everything prepared, and accompany us there as our counsel?"

"If that is your wish, sir. At four o'clock this afternoon I will be ready."

Mr. Norseworthy had just returned to the mill from his

daily excursion, and was seated in his office, calming his troubled mind with a cigar, when, to his surprise, two gigs drove up. He looked anxiously through the window a moment.

"Heavens and earth! Squire Chauncey! What's to pay now?"

And then rushing to the door with a cheerful face:

"Ah gents! how are you? Squire, glad to see you. Walk in. I don't know as any of you like tobacco smoke; but confound me! if a fellow mustn't have something to comfort him after running about all day. The fact is, they keep me going all the time. No rest for me, that I see. Squire, I believe I have never seen you in our mill before. We are not doing much just now; sales are dull and money tight. Did you ever know a tighter time for money, Squire Chauncey, since you can remember?"

"I never have much to do with money, you know, Mr. Norseworthy, on my own account. I believe it is not very plenty in the country just now."

"Not very plenty! No, sir; you may say that with safety. It beats all. What has become of it is more than I can tell."

The Squire knew Mr. Norseworthy; and after letting him run on thus far, at once proceeded to explain to him the nature of his visit; and in order to bring the whole subject, in all its bearings, before the mind of Mr. Norseworthy, related fully the legal measures he had come to execute. It took the latter completely by surprise.

"Well, gentlemen, I am at your mercy. Kill me if you please. A man can die but once. You may as well butcher me and put me under ground, as to do what you contemplate."

"There is no design on the part of either Mr. Sandford or Mr. Bradford to do you the least injury, Mr. Norseworthy; all they want is to be secure from injury themselves. You cannot blame them for that."

"How can I injure them?"

"You doubtless would not do so designedly. But matters are in an unsettled state; life is uncertain; the times are precarious."

"You may well say that. Such times I never see. A man can't tell one day where he'll be the next. O gentlemen! you must be merciful. It is a bad business—bad business—I know; but how the dogs it has turned out so, is beyond me to tell."

"That is the point of difficulty, Mr. Norseworthy; and

you must not be surprised if these gentlemen feel alarmed at the manner in which the business is carried on, since you acknowledge yourself the great loss is inexplicable to you."

"Certainly, Squire. Inexplicable! How can it be otherwise—I leave it to yourself? Now just listen. I have paid this season from four to five cents a pound for cotton waste—not a cent more—it costs two cents a pound for manufacturing; not a pound of batting has been sold for less than ten cents, and some as high as twelve. Now, Squire, make your own calculations."

"I suppose there is some waste in manufacturing. I presume you do not send off as many pounds of batting as you purchase of cotton. But that a loss has been made, I believe you acknowledge, Mr. Norseworthy; and, in the first place, we wish to see exactly what that is; or, at least, what we wish to see is the exact amount of indebtedness for which this concern is responsible."

"Well, we footed it up the other day. It is something like four thousand five hundred dollars."

"But let us have the items. You can take them from the books."

"The books! There an't much in the books." This Mr. Norseworthy said in a low voice, at the same time bringing forth from an inner pocket of his coat a large wallet.

"I have it here, somewhere, safe enough. There, sir, is the very paper we figured up upon the other day. There it is—four thousand five hundred and some odd."

"But this is in gross, Mr. Norseworthy."

"Of course it is. All we wanted was to see how matters stood. It's plain enough, Heaven knows."

"But what we want now, Mr. Norseworthy, is an account of this indebtedness—the different items. This is not all owing to one person, I take it."

"Well, as to that, I don't see what odds that makes. It is owing, and that is enough; and my obligations are given for it. My good sirs, can't you see? I am in the gap. If any one is to go to the dogs, it's me."

"You are not correct there, sir. These gentlemen are equally responsible for these debts with yourself, and have therefore a perfect right to know about them; and, to be plain with you, Mr. Norseworthy, they must know about them."

Mr. Norseworthy understood, from the emphatic manner of the Squire, that there must be no more by-play. He therefore commenced to give the account.

"Well, sir—Wells and Jones, Bloomsville, one thousand two hundred dollars."

"What for, Mr. Norseworthy?"

"Cotton waste, to be sure."

"Have you the bill, sir?"

Mr. Norseworthy had recourse again to his wallet.

"There are several bills. There is one—yes, and here is another. Just wait a minute—it is here somewhere."

"Do you not enter these on your books?"

"Books! Sometimes; but—yes, here it is. I knew it was safe somewhere. Here it is. There—now add them up."

"These items only make about ten hundred and fifty. Is this all that is owing this firm?"

"Yes, these three bills. Are you right, Squire? Let's see—yes. Well, it run in my head twelve hundred. It an't often my head is wrong; but sometimes, where there are so many different things to confuse one, we will forget. But I know that is all."

Both Bradford and Sandford knew that it was right; for they had reason to, having been sued that very day for this very account. As the officer told them, they found it impossible to get anything from Norseworthy.

"And now for the other items."

"There are no more items, as you call them. Yes, there is one hundred dollars due Hodge, the blacksmith, for work; put that down."

"The bill, Norseworthy."

"Bill! bless your soul, Hodge never makes out a bill, it's all on his book; you will have to call there, if you want to see it."

"Well, to whom is the rest owing?"

Mr. Norseworthy hesitated a moment.

"To Salmon Tigh."

The three gentlemen looked at each other, and Mr. Norseworthy looked among the papers of his wallet.

"And how much is that, Mr. Norseworthy?"

"Well, Squire, to be honest with you, I cannot tell you to a dollar; it is somewhere between three and four thousand dollars. I put it down on that paper the other day three thousand three hundred; it is somewhere about that sum."

"But this was not for waste, Mr. Norseworthy?"

"Well, you may call it so, if you please—waste and other things."

"Perhaps we may as well call it borrowed money."

"Yes, as well so as any way."

"Borrowed on your own account or for the concern?"

"Well of course."

"For the concern, then, you say; did you give your individual note?"

"Yes, sir, my note; but as agent."

"And I suppose Mr. Tigh received some extra pay?"

"Well, of course; he don't do much in that way for love that ever I heard of."

"And I suppose the note or notes are on demand?"

"Yes, sir."

Squire Chauncey leaned back in his chair, and looked at his two clients.

"Now, gentlemen, you perceive how things are situated; you are one and all of you at the mercy of Mr. Tigh; he can, any day he pleases, come on any one of you, and demand this three thousand five hundred dollars, which, as times now are, it might be very difficult for you to pay. Mr. Norseworthy, to be sure. is bound to pay the one half; whether he is prepared for such an emergency, he knows best"

"Me, sir! I might as well try to fly up to heaven without wings; it would be a dead set with me; he'd have to take skin and bones."

"And you perceive, therefore, Mr. Norseworthy, that, without a design on your part to injure these gentlemen, you have placed them in a very awkward position; they have been this day sued by Messrs. Wells and Jones for the amount due them; you know how such news flies about in the country; it will undoubtedly reach Mr. Tigh; indeed, I should not be at all surprised if he knows it already."

"Then we are all dead mutton." And Mr. Norseworthy rose from his seat and walked about in a very restless way, rubbing his nose one minute, and then scratching the back of his head. "Well, gents, there is no mistake," taking his seat; "if anything is to be done, it must be done quickly."

"You will of course, then, Mr. Norseworthy, be willing to confess judgment in favour of these gentlemen?"

"Yes, yes, I'll confess anything; where is it? You must be quick; if that old scare-devil once gets a scent of any trouble in this quarter, there will be murder in less than no time. Confess judgment? yes."

Mr. Chauncey soon produced the document.

"For how much?" said the Squire, looking earnestly at him.

"The full amount."

"And under oath, Mr. Norseworthy, this is the whole amount for which these gentlemen are or can by any possibility be implicated?"

"Yes, most solemnly; though stop, yes, it may be there is owing Tigh a few hundreds more—say three hundred more at the outside."

The instrument was then completed, and Mr. Norseworthy's signature annexed. But he had barely time to perform that operation, and the paper had been just passed into the hands of Squire Chauncey, when a gig stopped, and Mr. Norseworthy exclaimed:

"Good Lord deliver us!"

The gentlemen perceived that it was Tigh himself.

"Now, now, Bradford, you have a smart horse," Mr. Norseworthy exclaimed; "you take that paper and go, whip and drive, to the town clerk's office, and get it on record. Quick, man, quick!"

Bradford rose in great alarm, for Norseworthy seemed much agitated; but Squire Chauncey spoke:

"Gentlemen, be quiet; there is time enough. If his mortgage is on record, it will be too late; and if not, we shall be able without doubt to anticipate him. Mr. Norseworthy, you had better let me manage this matter for all of you. I know the drift of things now, I believe, pretty well. You are helpless now."

"Anything, Squire, that you say; but he has no bowels of mercy, remember that. I will be mum, if you say so; I almost wish I *was* dumb. Now for it!"

Mr. Tigh came in, looked somewhat surprised at seeing the company there assembled. He addressed each one pleasantly, however, and then turning to Mr. Norseworthy,

"If the gentlemen here present will excuse you a few moments, I want to say a word with you in private."

Norseworthy cast an imploring eye toward the Squire as he rose to obey the summons.

"Mr. Tigh," said the Squire, "we are attending to some very important business at present; and moreover, I must say to you that Mr. Norseworthy's affairs as well as those of the other gentlemen present, are in my hands."

"What am I to understand by that?" looking very fiercely at Norseworthy.

Mr. Norseworthy made no reply, but kept his eye turned toward the Squire, who at once said:

"You must understand by it, Mr. Tigh, that Mr. Norseworthy has confessed judgment in favour of these gentlemen, to whom he is largely indebted."

"He has, ha! Well, well, that is it; then perhaps these gentlemen will be willing to confess judgment to me also. I believe I can make up a little bill against them."

"That is just what they wish, Mr. Tigh. You have a bill against Mr. Norseworthy for which they are responsible: will you present it? Mr. Norseworthy can testify as to its correctness; it can as well be settled now as at any other time."

"I am glad to hear that; money is not very plenty at present. I know it an't with me, at any rate."

"Sit down. Mr. Tigh." The Squire said this as he saw the gentleman take out his pocket-book, and begin to look for papers.

Mr. Tigh was not long in producing the documents; they were carefully wrapped together in an envelope which he laid on the table, and then replaced their receptacle. Norseworthy eyed the little package as though he had a longing toward it; it had caused him a deal of thought and worry; he even then felt a tremour creeping about his heart—such power has a scrap of paper with a name on it!

"One, two, three," Mr. Tigh counted aloud as he laid each note by itself; "four, five, six, seven, eight; there, gentlemen, are the documents. Mr. Norseworthy, do you look over them, and say if they are not all correct."

Mr. Norseworthy arose and looked them over carefully, and then took his seat again.

"What say you," said Tigh; "all right, are they not?"

Norseworthy did not reply, he merely looked at the Squire; he was determined not to do any harm by speaking.

"You acknowledge them, do you, Mr. Norseworthy, as your notes given as agent for the mill?" said the Squire.

"All right."

"And these, Mr. Tigh, are all that you hold against these gentlemen, as part owners of this mill?"

"These are all that I hold against Mr. Norseworthy as agent for this mill. I hold other notes against these gentlemen."

"We do not want them at present, sir. You have no other claims of any kind against Mr. Norseworthy as the agent for this factory?"

"None that I think of."

"Have you any, Mr. Tigh?"

"No, sir."

"Now, then, sir, you can reckon them up."

"They are on interest, as you perceive, Squire Chauncey; I will soon cast that up."

The whole amount, with interest, did not quite reach the sum which Mr. Norseworthy had estimated; it did not exceed three thousand five hundred dollars.

The Squire then made some calculations of his own, and then turning to Mr. Norseworthy—

"Can you tell me, sir, the exact amount you received for each of these notes? Here is one of one thousand dollars on demand, with interest from date. Did you, Mr. Norseworthy, receive that amount in full?" As Mr. Norseworthy did not reply, the Squire continued—

"Remember, Mr. Norseworthy, you, as agent for this concern, must give a true account of the moneys you have received and expended for it. Now, how much did you receive for that note?"

Norseworthy now in turn had recourse to his pocket-book, and began hunting for documents.

"I can see no reason for all this, Squire Chauncey; the face of these notes speak for themselves; they are all for value received."

"I have a reason, Mr. Tigh."

Mr. Norseworthy had now produced a strip of paper, and, examining the date of the note, handed the paper to the Squire.

"If the figures are correct, Mr. Norseworthy, you received for this note, on demand, eight hundred and fifty dollars. Was that all, sir?"

"It was so, sir."

"That is a lie!" Mr. Tigh was deadly pale, he was in great anger, and, catching up his notes, bundled them together and commenced replacing them in his pocket-book. "I see, I see; but you won't get round Salmon Tigh that way; these notes are 'bona fidely' good for the face of them. Yes, sir; they are 'bona fidely' good, and you will find they have got to be paid to the last dollar. I see now how it is; you have put your heads together to cheat me out of my honest dues; but if there is any law in the land, I'll have my money, and that in short order, every dollar of it." And, so saying, he struck his fist with great force on the table.

Tigh was, no doubt, angry, but a good deal of his fury was put on. He thought to alarm them, as he had often done many of those who had unfortunately been, for the time, in his power. Mr. Sandford would have spoken and assured him that, so far as he was concerned, no advantage should be taken, and that he would hold himself responsible for every dollar justly due; but he knew that Squire Chauncey was an

honest and honourable man, and as he had committed the business to him, he would not interfere.

The Squire was not in the least affected by this outbreak; he expected it; he knew Tigh well. So, in a calm and rather low voice, he said:

"We have not quite done with this business yet, Mr. Tigh. You must realize how matters are now situated. These gentlemen are willing to bear what responsibility rests upon them. Mr. Sandford owns one quarter of the mill, and, of course, one quarter of the loss which has accrued from running it falls upon him; Mr. Bradford is exonerated from loss, as he had nothing to do with that part of the business; and Mr. Norseworthy will, unfortunately, have to bear, therefore, the other three fourths; it has been a bad business, but that cannot be helped now. The true question for you to decide now is, whether you had better settle with these gentlemen, as I and no doubt you would think, if you would look at the matter dispassionately, fairly, and honourably. You can, if you choose, come upon them individually for the whole amount; but they would, no doubt, resist the demand; and if the particulars should be laid bare in court, as they would be, you well know where you would stand."

"What do you call fair and honourable?"

"The mill has lost, within the last year, four thousand five hundred dollars; one fourth of this sum belongs to Mr. Sandford to pay—he has already settled for this with Mr. Norseworthy—but one thousand and fifty dollars he is responsible for to Jones and Wells; this item, if he pays it, which he must do, will give him a lien on Mr. Norseworthy's property for that sum and the costs. Mr. Norseworthy having confessed judgment to him, gives him, you know, the whole control of all he has to the full amount of judgment."

"But what good will this judgment do him, or any one else, against my mortgage? I have a mortgage on all the property that fellow has in the world," pointing to Norseworthy, who moved his chair, but said nothing.

"And what will your mortgage avail you until the judgment is satisfied, since it is not on record?"

"How do you know?"

"It was not an hour ago."

Tigh sat down—he had been standing from the time he flew into a rage—and quietly turned toward Norseworthy and looked him full in the face. Norseworthy had his own share of brass, and was not easily put to confusion. Things were now in such a condition that he felt comparatively at ease;

he had reached bottom; he could not well fall any lower; he did not even fear Tigh. So he leaned back in his chair and, folding his arms, returned the look of his adversary with a certain air of complacency. Tigh, in fact, felt that he had met with his match; he thought he knew Norseworthy; that he had him in his power and could make a tool of him, and take advantage of his careless management to add to his own gains. He now felt that he had been the fool, and was the victim caught. He really began to feel some respect for him. At length a smile trembled at the corners of his wide mouth. Norseworthy spoke—

"You feel a little better, don't you, Tigh?"

Tigh turned away, merely saying:

"D—n you!"

Squire Chauncey waited a moment, while this by-play was enacting, and as soon as Tigh turned himself round—

"Mr. Tigh, I am desirous to know what you intend doing in this case. Are you willing to settle up this matter at once, or let it go through a course of law? That question must be decided forthwith."

"Why, Squire Chauncey, you know I am not fond of law. I don't wish to injure these gentlemen; I am sure, also, they have no desire to wrong me. You arrange it in any way that you think is right. Lord! when a man gets into a trap, he must get out of it the best way he can. It don't frighten me to lose a little money; but Mr. Norseworthy here—I did not think he would use an old friend as he has used me! There, Squire, there are the notes; do with them just what you please."

Tigh was in no better humour than he had been from the first few moments after his arrival; but he knew well how matters stood, and he saw that his better way was to make a virtue of necessity. He had made this visit for a very different purpose than that in which he found himself engaged; his design was to force Norseworthy to a sale of the mill, at least of his share of it. He had no faith in the representations of that gentleman as to the great profits he was realizing, but he knew well that such establishments were doing a handsome business, and he knew where he could dispose of it for a much larger sum than Norseworthy valued it; in fact, he had an offer, from a responsible concern, of two thousand five hundred dollars a year for a four years' lease only. His whole plan was suddenly frustrated by the condition in which he found things. That judgment must be satisfied, or Norseworthy could give him no title. To prosecute the other parties, with Squire Chauncey for their defender, and with

such testimony as Norseworthy could be made to give, would be an exposure without any profit. And as he now saw the condition of things to be such that, no doubt, all the parties would be willing to sell out at even a sacrifice, his plans were at once laid, and conciliation he saw was his wisest course.

Squire Chauncey was not long in adjusting matters on equitable principles. Bradford was, of course, freed from all responsibility; the claim of Wells and Jones was to be immediately paid by Mr. Tigh, to be held against Norseworthy; Mr. Sandford was to meet his share of the loss by paying, when due, the note he had given to Norseworthy. It was, indeed, a serious matter to him, and, added to other obligations which he knew were in the hands of Mr. Tigh, was a cause of deep concern; but all further fear of responsibility for Norseworthy's agency was at an end. He knew the worst now, and must be prepared for consequences.

Tigh made wry faces, and higgled a good deal, but yielded with a better grace than could have been anticipated; and when all was settled he fixed his eye on Norseworthy.

"Now, my boy, you and I have got to settle."

Norseworthy assumed a stolid look, and returned his gaze.

"Pound away; I'm at your mercy; you can't have more than my skin—you can sell that for drum-heads if you wish."

"Your skin! why, man, your whole property is at my mercy."

"It's been so a long while; and I'd as lief you'd have it as not. You've led me a dog's life long enough. I haven't felt my soul was my own these six years. You are a grinding old thief; and if it was not for this present company, I'd pound your old carcass to a jelly." And Norseworthy's eyes began to flash, and his face grew purplish red. Tigh was perhaps a little startled; he knew Norseworthy to be rather furious when once stirred up, and now being somewhat desperate, he did not know what he might do.

"Pounding me won't pay the debt you owe, it would only add to it. What do you say to selling me your share of the mill, and the twenty-acre lot adjoining it, and making a fair swap?"

"What do you mean by a swap?"

"Why, a swap—gentlemen, don't go—Squire, wait a minute; you have helped me settle part of this business, perhaps we can finish it off." The three gentlemen had risen to depart, as they did not care to have anything to do with the

squabble between the other parties; but the Squire, at Mr. Tigh's request, again took his seat."

"We shall not be wanted further, I presume," said Mr. Sandford.

"Yes, gentlemen, I have a word to say to both of you; you had better be seated." And then turning again to Norseworthy: "You value your twenty-acre lot and your mill at six thousand."

Norseworthy quickly replied:

"The land is worth all of fifteen hundred dollars; it's the finest lot of land in the town, that you know; and the mill is worth all of seven thousand dollars, and you know it."

"I should think so, from the profits these gentlemen have received the last year for their share. But I tell you what it is, you owe me three thousand five hundred dollars; you give me a deed for that land, and for your half of the mill, and I will give up to you the mortgage and all the notes I hold against you."

"The mortgage against the farm too?"

"Of course."

"It's a bargain."

"Squire Chauncey, please make out the papers, and I here pass all my notes against Mr. Norseworthy into your hands, to be given up to him when he executes the papers."

As soon as Norseworthy saw those terrible little instruments safe in the hands of Squire Chauncey, he turned toward Tigh:

"Now, Tigh, you and I are square. I don't fear you now, and can tell you just what I think of you; and I don't do it in anger, as I did just now. You have played the tyrant over me a good while; you have wrung my hard earnings away by extortion; you have taken advantage of my necessities, under the guise of helping me as a friend, and at last you have wrenched from me a property that I have thought much of, and which I know can be made of great value. You need not tell me that it is done by my own consent. I consent to it willingly, for I have been long enough in the power of a man who has no soul."

"Have you done, Mr. Norseworthy?"

"Not quite, sir."

"Go on and finish."

"I will. You have had your turn, and now mine has come; but the rod I hold over you will consign you where you should have been long ago, to a felon's cell."

All the gentlemen looked at Norseworthy in amazement.

"I can prove, gentlemen, what I say; but it will be done

in a court of justice, where all the world can hear it. Suffice it now that I say to you, money used for bribery in order to injure the standing and take away the property of an upright and honourable man, will burn your soul worse than all the usurious interest you ever charged."

"Bribery! what do you mean by that, sir?"

"Ask Jane Simmons."

Tigh started as though an electric shock had passed through him, while all noticed that he turned deadly pale.

"Gentlemen," said Norseworthy, "I have no further business here, and so bid you good afternoon; to-morrow, Squire, I will call and execute those papers." And so saying, he left the room.

Squire Chauncey looked very steadily at Tigh for a moment after Norseworthy had left, and that gentleman evidently felt quite uneasy under his gaze; and then he commenced making marks on a piece of paper, a habit he had when thinking hard.

"You wished to say something to us, I believe, Mr. Tigh?" said Mr. Sandford, breaking in upon the silence, which, for a time, was somewhat embarrassing.

"It was in reference to this mill. I have thought, as things turned out, you might probably both of you wish to sell out."

"What can you afford to give, Mr. Tigh?" said the Squire.

"Why, as to that, to call the thing what it is really worth, it would be a pretty low figure. I suppose the part I have bought stands me in a little over two thousand dollars, that is, calling the land worth fifteen hundred; but I will say twelve hundred a piece for each share."

"Hardly enough, Mr. Tigh. I should advise these gentlemen, as things are situated, to dispose of their interest, provided they could obtain what it cost them. Mr. Norseworthy made a sacrifice, and I think a wise one; it frees his farm and homestead from debt, which is a great thing. What say you, gentlemen? are you willing to dispose of your shares for the fifteen hundred?"

"It has been an unfortunate concern for me," replied Mr. Sandford; "but if I can get what I gave, I would be willing to part with it."

"And I also," answered Bradford.

"Then, Squire, I hand you the two notes, to be given up to these gentlemen when they have executed the deeds."

Thus ended the conference. It had resulted much better than any of them anticipated. Bradford was again free from

an entanglement that might have been of most serious consequences to him, and from which he had learned a lesson for life, and that was, "*to come under no obligations to be met by prospective gains, and never to engage in a business of which he knows nothing, and which he is to manage by proxy.*"

Mr. Sandford has reduced the amount of his responsibilities to Tigh; but Mr. Tigh still holds enough to cause him serious apprehensions. He has made up his mind, however, to have all his affairs settled. His life-work, he feels, is not yet done, and the trials he has passed through have stimulated him to engage more heartily than ever in active business; he thinks *no more of rest; he has spent his holiday and learned that true enjoyment cannot be separated from care and labour.*

CHAPTER XV

SQUIRE CHAUNCEY did not forget the scene which had transpired between Tigh and Norseworthy after the settlement of their business. The word *bribery* kept ringing in his ears; and an idea that had rushed into his mind almost at the instant the charge was made, kept working up into strange shapes and connecting itself with circumstances of small account of themselves, but magnified into immense importance by that connection. The Squire, though apparently too methodical to be much in haste about anything, yet when aroused by an emergency, could be energetic and ready to give order and method the go by.

He had closed his office, and seated himself in his parlour with a city paper before him for an evening's enjoyment and rest. The paper, however, did not seem to have much matter of interest enough to absorb his attention; for after looking over it a few moments, he laid it on his lap, and sat with his hands before him thinking; for some time he might have been taken for one whose spirit had departed—not a muscle moved. It might have been a half-hour that was thus spent, when suddenly he laid the paper on the table, arose and rung the bell, then threw off his slippers and commenced putting on his boots. The servant entered.

"Did you ring for me, sir?"

"Thomas, will you get up Kate for me?"

"In the gig, sir?"

"No, put the saddle on her, Thomas, and be as expeditious as you can."

In less than half an hour the Squire was alighting before a substantial farm-house, a little removed from the highway, from which a lane led up to the door. As he knocked, the

gentleman who came to the door had no sooner opened it than he exclaimed with apparent alarm:

"Squire Chauncey! Anything the matter?"

"Don't be alarmed, Mr. Norseworthy; I only want to have a few words with you."

"Walk in, then; walk in, Squire—the dogs! but you gave me quite a start. Take this seat, Squire; you will find it easier than the one you have hold of. No flare-up by Tigh, is there?"

"Oh! no, sir; that is all safe enough, and I am very glad you took him up so promptly. I think you did a wise thing, Mr. Norseworthy. You have cleared off a load of debt—a very bad burden for any one to carry."

"Squire Chauncey, I have been happier this evening than I have been these six years. I feel like a new man in a new world. I can now feel that I have a house over my head that I can call my own. I can look at my fields without feeling as if Salmon Tigh could any day trip me out of them—odds, Squire, I am going to turn over a new leaf. I shall take off my old horse's shoes, and turn him out to pasture, and I am going to stay just here. No quarry, or mill, or any such humbug shall drive me round from pillar to post. I've done with them for ever. I am going to take care of my farm, and my farm will take care of me; I don't fear that."

"That is a wise resolve, sir."

"But it galls me some, Squire, to think what a thing that old sharper will make out of it; by the way, Squire, did he buy the other shares?"

"Yes, sir, he owns the whole now."

"The old serpent! he ought to be made to go on his belly like all other snakes. Just to think of it! Why, Squire, I knew, when I accepted his offer, that he knew where he could make a lease of that concern for four years for twenty-five hundred dollars a year—there is ten thousand dollars only for the use of it for four years."

"Is that so?"

"It is the solemn truth, Squire; and if I had not closed with him, he would have brought us all up standing. No, I saw from the cut of his eye when he first came in that he was bent on mischief."

"My object, Mr. Norseworthy, in calling on you this evening, is to ask you a few questions about that charge you made against Mr. Tigh this afternoon."

"About bribery! ha! ha! ha!—how he squirmed, ha! Did you notice him, Squire?"

"Something seemed to affect him rather seriously. What name was that you mentioned?"

"Jane Simmons."

"Does she live about here?"

"That I can't tell you, Squire. Nor do I know if she is living anywhere. I made rather a venture when I gave out that name; but something about it made the fellow squirm. I made the charge, Squire, as I would not have dared to make against any one else on no more certain grounds; but it is my belief, for all that, that I hit the nail on the head. In the first place, he has a bitter hatred against Donald Roland."

"Ah! I never suspected that."

"He has, though; and snake-like as he is, he will sting him slyly if he can. He dare not attack such a man openly, but he will work along in secret underground."

"Why should he dislike Donald? they never had any dealings together that I know of."

"No, no; Donald would not be likely to have anything to do with such a man as Tigh; but you know—no, you would not be very likely to know Jaques."

"Jaques! What, the man whom Mr. Tigh took out a warrant against for stealing his wood?"

"Yes, that's the man. You see he was a bad fellow, and Tigh knew it. He knew, too, that he kept a gambling-shop; but for all that he patronized him—let him have money and all that—because Jaques had under his control a parcel of men whom he could manage just as he pleased, and make them cut and draw wood at under price; and Tigh has a world of wood to cut and send to market every year. Well, Donald, you know, is a justice of the peace, and finding out that there was such doings at Jaques's store, or tavern, or whatever it was, he sends Busby and clears them out. So Jaques, finding the best part of his business gone, clears out and gives Tigh, whom he owed, as Tigh says, twelve hundred dollars, leg-bail. Tigh, you know, tried to catch him, but the rogue was too quick for him. So he charges all his loss to Donald—he hates him bitterly, but he keeps it to himself. But as I was saying, as for my making this charge against Tigh. You know that old story about Donald has been brought up again of late? You know what it is?"

"Yes, doubtless, I know to what you allude."

"Well, sir, I have no doubt it has been started by that she-devil, his aunt—a very devil incarnate that woman is. People round here don't know her. They think she is all meekness and all that; but my wife was from the place where she lived during Peabody's lifetime. She has heard enough

of her. She is, if all stories are true, a real fiend; and how she has managed to keep from deviltry so many years is more than I can tell; but wait—you will see, Squire, if it don't turn out as I say. They may not be able to prove it, but I have reason to believe that that will of old Roland was put into her hands to burn up. At a time before Donald was born, when the old man was taken very ill and like to die, his wife was sick at the time, and Mrs. Peabody was with them. I know, for old Doctor Yates, who is now dead and gone, told me so once when he was tending upon me. You know the old man was full of his stories?'"

"Yes, sir, I remember him well."

"The old man was talking about scenes he had witnessed at different places, and he went on to tell me how frightened Mr. Roland was as he lay there sick, when the Doctor, in order to cheer him up, made known to him the fact that there was a prospect of his having an heir. You know they had given up all hopes of having children. 'For heaven's sake,' said he, 'Doctor, don't trifle with me; is it true?' 'Not the least doubt of it,' said the Doctor. 'Then,' said he, 'won't somebody call Betsey?'"

"Was that Mrs. Peabody?"

"Yes, he always called her Betsey—'Won't somebody call Betsey?' So the Doctor said he stepped downstairs and sent her up. She was up there awhile, and then, when he went up again to see Mr. Roland, he met her in the entry. 'What's been to pay?' said the Doctor. 'Oh! nothing; he only wanted me to fix his bed a little.' The Doctor made no reply; but when he went into the room, Mr. Roland said: 'O Doctor! it was a mercy you told me that news. I might have died without knowing it. I've fixed it now.' I asked the Doctor what it was he had fixed—he couldn't have made a will! 'No,' said the Doctor; 'my opinion is he had *destroyed one*, of his sister did for him.'"

"Indeed! The old Doctor, you say, told you this?"

"True as I sit here, Squire; and although I have never said anything to living soul before about it—in fact, it never came into my mind until the news got out that a will had been found—it struck me at once, then; and I shall always believe it, that that woman contrived some way to make him think she had destroyed it, and just took it into her own possession, thinking, no doubt, that some day she might find use for it."

"But, Mr. Norseworthy, what induced you to mention the name of that woman, and in connection with the charge of bribery?"

"Why, Squire Chauncey, if you knew Tigh as I do, you

would know that there is nothing he would stop at, if by it he could accomplish his end—it might be revenge, or it might be the gain of a few hundreds. He would swear to a lie, or he would get another to swear to it. That is just my opinion of the man. Well, I know that for some time past he has been quite thick with Mrs. Peabody. He has been several times at her house, and she has been to see him. Well, when two devils put their heads together, there is mischief brewing, depend on *that*, and as soon as I heard this old story about Donald started again, and also the story of finding the will, I made up my mind that a game was about to be played to destroy that young man, if possible. And so, as though it was all accidental, at times, when talking with Tigh, I have tried to see how he felt. You know you can generally tell how a man wishes a thing to go by the opinion he expresses as to its success; and I made up my mind pretty straight. Of course, I was in no situation to oppose Tigh, or to say anything very decided about the matter; but my opinion was formed, for all that; and I have firmly believed that if there was no evidence that could be obtained by fair means, it would be got by foul means. Another thing that has helped my suspicions that there was mischief brewing is, that Jim Peabody, who has a deadly hatred against Donald, has come home and is living with his mother. And he has been to see Tigh; and he has also been twice, to my knowledge, up in the mountains east of here. What for, I don't know; but on one of these occasions, while I was coming from Bloomsville, I saw him standing with an elderly woman at a little distance from the house. She was talking to him; and he was putting down, as I thought, something she said; for he was writing on a little book he had in his hand—kind of making notes or memorandums. He didn't turn to look at me as I passed; but I knew the fellow for all that. The woman, though, looked me full in the face and stopped talking. Well, you see, Squire, I am always trying to account for things I meet with that are a little strange—it's my habit—and putting this thing along with others, and knowing the feelings of some folks, I came to the conclusion that there was deviltry going on."

"But you haven't told me yet, Mr. Norseworthy, for what reason you mentioned that particular name—Seaman, or Simmons."

"Simmons—Jane Simmons. I will tell you, Squire—just wait a minute."

And Mr. Norseworthy immediately brought forth his large pocket-book.

"You see, Squire, I have been obliged to be on the go pretty much all the time, what with one thing and what with many others—that I have had no time to do things as they ought to be done. Bills, and receipts, and old notes, and money, and contracts, and memorandums, and all that—I put them all in here. I never destroy papers, even if they have only a few calculations on them; they might possibly be of some use. Once in a great while I look over and clear out, and so be ready for a new batch. But I put everything in here, and then I know it is safe; though sometimes it takes a good deal of looking over to find it. It is somewhere here, Squire. Have a little patience. Ah! here it is—I knew it was safe. There, Squire, read that."

The Squire looked over the paper, knitting his brows; but whether because it was unsatisfactory, or unfolding some unpleasant circumstance, we cannot say. It was a mere scrap of paper, apparently part of a fly-leaf torn out of a book. The writing was in a woman's hand, and the following is a copy of it:

"Louise B—— and Sarah H——; road to K——, near the forks. Jane Simmons knows them. Better see her first. They are quite poor."

"How did you come by this paper, Mr. Norseworthy, and why did you suppose that Mr. Tigh had any connection with it? The handwriting is not his."

"No, it is not Tigh's writing; I know that. The old fellow's handwriting is pretty familiar to me. But the reason why I believed it had belonged to him, and for some special use, was, that not long since he was at the mill, and was sitting at the very table we were all around this afternoon. He had his pocket-book out, looking for some blank checks to fill up for two different amounts I wanted. He had to take two checks, because he could not draw for all I wanted that day, and so he dated one ahead. He opened his pocket-book on his lap, and I suppose this scrap of paper fell out; for after he had gone out—which he did at once, for he was in a hurry, as he said he had a long ride to take—I found it under the table, and put it into my pocket-book, intending, the next time I saw him, to hand it to him, or at least to ask him if he had lost it; but as my suspicions, as I have told you, had become waked up, I thought I would say nothing about it; and putting things together, I ventured upon the charge I made, and upon mentioning the name that is written there in full."

"It is a singular coincidence that your charge against him and the mention of that name should have affected him as it did I perceive you have a very indifferent opinion of Mr. Tigh."

"I know Tigh, Squire, I rather guess, a little better than most people. The fact is, Tigh thinks, or he did think—he may have changed his opinion a little; but I know he has thought me a kind of easy, careless, flighty, crack-brained sort of a fellow; and he has let himself out more freely than he ever would to you, Squire. If you live a few years longer, you may possibly find him out. Now just look at this transaction this afternoon. He has pretended to be a great friend of mine. He knew my circumstances; he knew I was trying to make that mill property pay; he had this offer of ten thousand dollars for a four years' lease of it, by responsible people; he knew that that sum would not only clear off my debts, but leave me a good surplus, and my mill and land beside. But no; his avarice was too strong for justice or benevolence. He is, in my opinion, sir, no better than a thief, as I called him."

"I suppose you do not know, Mr. Norseworthy, that I have been applied to as counsel for Mrs. Peabody?"

"You have not accepted it?"

"I have, sir."

"I am sorry, Squire."

"Give me your reasons."

"In the first place, I look upon the whole business as a cheat—as an attempt to ruin a high-minded, noble, generous young fellow. There is not a finer man in this town than Donald Roland. He would sooner wrong himself than he would take a dollar from any man. Only see what he has been doing lately—clearing out that hole up in the Notch there; building a school-house for the poor; and already he has put up three decent, snug, small houses, to accommodate some of the hard-labouring men; and he lets them have them rent free the first year. Some say he don't care much for religion—he don't believe this, that, and the other; but I tell you, Squire, I had rather run Donald's chance in the next world than that of a good many others that think they are full tilt on the right road to heaven."

"Have you any other reason, Mr. Norseworthy?"

"Well, Squire, it is none of my business—but you must excuse me for speaking my mind—but I must say I hate to have you taking sides with villany."

"You know that is to be proved yet."

"They will never prove it to my satisfaction—they may swear till they are blue. I firmly believe, Squire, that there is a conspiracy to ruin Donald; and I believe Salmon Tigh is the chief devil among them."

"I was intending to ask you, Mr. Norseworthy, as I believe

you can do it much better than I can—and I will see that you are paid for your trouble—that is, to find out the names of those two persons whose initials are on this paper, and also about their characters, so far as you can, and also the character and whereabouts of this Jane Simmons."

"Squire Chauncey, before I would do anything to help about this business, I would stick my hand in the hopper of a grist-mill."

"But you know it is desirable for us to come at the truth. These people may possibly have nothing to do with this business. If they are to be used in any way, it would be very desirable for me at least to know something of their credibility. You do not think, Mr. Norseworthy, I would wink at false testimony, or even use a witness in whose truthfulness I had not the most perfect confidence?"

"I have never thought you would, Squire, do anything that was not right; but if any man but yourself had told me that you had taken up such a case as this against such a man as Donald Roland, I should have told him it was a lie; that I didn't believe a word of it."

"Let us reverse situations, Mr. Norseworthy; you imagine yourself in my place, and add to that your friendship for him was of a long standing and very warm and true, and you were applied to as a counsel to manage a case against him, which you believed a very unjust one, but of which you knew it was of the last importance to get at the truth; that it was a case in which you feared false testimony might be produced in order to ruin him in property and personal standing; would you not feel that you would have a better chance to detect the wrong and probe the matter to the bottom by being employed as counsel against him, than you could as his ostensible defender? Think of this present case in all its bearings, and then say what you think."

Mr. Norseworthy looked at the Squire a moment in silence.

"Squire Chauncey, you puzzle me this time. It beat all my calculations when you first told me that you had taken up sides against Donald. Then you are for him, after all?"

"My heart is for him; but, Mr. Norseworthy, I mean to find out the truth in this case, if it can be found. If he is not the son of Robert Roland, it ought to be known, and that matter settled once for all. If, on the other hand, a conspiracy to ruin him has been devised, it ought to be sifted thoroughly, and the parties made to suffer what they deserve."

"But, Squire, one thing I can tell you, if there is deviltry

in it, they will keep it from you, depend upon that, and it looks rather dark for Donald that they should have gone to you. I'm afraid they have got a pretty strong turn on the rope."

"That is my fear too, sir; but, as I have said, let the truth come out. But, in order to that end, I shall want to know all about my witnesses. Now, sir, it will be impossible for me to ascertain their character as some person not known in the case might. I can, to be sure, by questioning them in private, as I shall do, perhaps, find a serious flaw in their statement; but my opinion is that no witnesses will be presented to me that cannot tell a straight story."

"You may depend upon that, Squire."

"Another thing I should like to ascertain, and that is, whether Mr. Tigh is taking any active part in this matter. He made the application to me, he says, only for Mrs. Peabody—merely as an act of friendship."

"Friendship! the old ——. Squire, I know you don't like to hear swearing, but I can't help it. Friendship! I tell you, Squire, it an't in him. When he talks of friendship it is like a certain person we hear of quoting Scripture."

"I must confess, Mr. Norseworthy, it aroused my suspicion, as well as the fact of his offering me a fee."

"Did you take it?"

"No, sir, I did not; it would be binding me in a way I should not care to be—in such a case as this."

"I tell you what, Squire Chauncey, I think I see the drift of things, now. I see a little how you stand and what you want, and I am your man to do anything you ask that is in my power to do. I am heart and soul with you, now."

"I want to get at the truth, Mr. Norseworthy."

"I understand you, sir."

"What I have thought of is this: you are better acquainted, perhaps, with people in this town than many others, at least than I am; you are around a great deal, mingling with all sorts of folks, and have opportunity to see and hear which I have not. I want your aid in this matter, and will, from time to time, give you a hint. I want, in fact, a detective."

"I will drive night and day, Squire—odds! I was going to take off the old mare's shoes, but I shan't do it yet."

"I regret, somewhat, that there is such a breach between you and Mr. Tigh: something might possibly be elicited from him."

"Never mind the breach, Squire; ten to one he will ask

me, before the week is out, to show him something about the mill. La, Squire, there is no more sensibility about him than in the fore-shoulder of an old ox."

"We understand each other, then. I shall be faithful to the trust confided to me, and shall go straight forward in this case as if I had no special interest for Donald. But, if they are playing false, and I can bring it out that such is the case, they will bitterly rue the day they came to ask my help."

"And if it don't prove so, Squire, you may take my head for a foot-ball."

"You may be right, Mr. Norseworthy; but keep in mind Justice is represented as blindfold. Truth often gets the worst of it under her decisions. I have my fears, very great fear sometimes, how this matter may end."

"One thing more I have to say, Squire: you spoke about compensation——"

"You shall be well rewarded."

"Squire Chauncey, I would as soon take up a handful of live coals as to touch a dollar for such a business as this. Donald Roland has always treated me like a gentleman. I like the young fellow. I pity him in his trouble, and what I can do to help him in maintaining his rights, I will do with might and main—but no compensation. La, Squire, it will be only fun for me to go hurry-skurrying round now, so long as I am free from debt and an't money-hunting; that's the—I was going to swear again, Squire—but it's the most condemnable business a man ever did."

CHAPTER XVI.

IT is a common saying, "that we never prize our blessings until they have been taken from us." This may not be true with all; but one thing is certain—to enjoy life, we must experience its contrasts. No man can realize the exultant cry of "Land ho!" but he who has for weeks been tossed on a stormy sea. The firm tread on solid ground is to the shipwrecked mariner like the smile of attending angels on the nether shore of Jordan. It seems hard at times, when tussling with the bitter storms of life, that our short career on earth should be so harassed by tempests—that so much care must wear our hearts—that so large a portion of our narrow span must be spent in toil and anxiety and watching against chance and change. Experience alone can teach us what these mean; and by experience alone we learn that these are all necessary branches of an education that not only is to make us more truly useful and happy here, but essential co-workers with Divine grace in fitting us for the longer and better life beyond.

Mr. Sandford, no doubt, thought himself perfectly justified in retiring from the busy world in which his lot had been cast in early life. He did not care for wealth; but he wanted rest. He wanted to moor his bark in some sheltered harbour, where the outer storms could not reach, and where sunny shores would smile on him and gentle breezes play around; no more fears of wreck, no more toil with flapping sails nor tedious watching of the helm. But he soon found that clouds can spread over the safest harbour; that land-storms are as those that lash the ocean; and that watchfulness and care are needed, anchor where we may.

He had for some time been aware of this; and there were moments when he feared that all would be lost. Without due caution, he now sees that he has placed himself in more hazard than he was ever exposed to before. Happily, how-

ever, the worst of that danger has been passed. He has been freed from all responsibility on account of the mill, and is able to calculate to a certainty how much he owes and wherewith he can meet his dues. The experience he has gone through has been a severe one. He has, indeed, been free from labour; but the humiliation he has endured from being under pecuniary obligations; the vexation of mind in dealing with business he knew nothing about, and with persons trained in a different sphere—have combined to wake into life the energy of former days, and to give a different cast to the scenes and duties of his city life. This state of mind had been gradual in his progress; but it was no fitful feeling when once established. His path now seemed plain. The only obstacle that troubled him was the fear that his lovely wife would be so sad at parting with a home where she had been so happy. She had, indeed, as we have seen, anticipated that, and told him—and told him truly—that she was ready to leave and go cheerfully wherever he felt his duty called. But he knew how much she had enjoyed the thought that this was to be their *home*—a word which could not well be applied to any house in which they had lived before—a word almost unknown in city life. Here there were to be no removals; it was their own; they could add to it or change it as they pleased. The fields that spread around them she had roamed over with delight—with childish pleasure; that little brook which he had dammed to please her fancy, and about which willows had been planted—planted at her own direction; the arbour close by the little pond, and where, in summer days, she had sat and listened to the rippling music of the water over its pebbly bottom; the large trees that threw their shadows even to their doorsteps; all these she had looked upon as hers—as his—to be a resting-place through life for them and for their children. He knew she doted on this spot; and if he could help it, nothing should tear her from or destroy the pleasant fancies she had woven round it. But part with it he must. Some little capital, indeed, would be left after all was paid; but that would be needed to commence anew his former business.

It was indeed a lovely sight—the bright and cheerful look which met her husband's sorrowing gaze, as he made known the fact that their place must be sold and they return to the city, and, as it were, begin life anew.

"Oh!" said she, "how glad Betty will be to hear that!"

"Is Betty tired of the country, too?"

"You need not say *too*, dear husband. We are none of us really tired of the country; but Betty, you know, was not

so eager for removal as you and I—she knew some of its inconveniences better than we did. She has, however, never uttered a word of complaint; only at times, when you have been troubled with the men, she has said: "It's a sair grief that his life should be so vexed with them outlandish, rude critters.' And lately she said to me: 'I'm doubting, Mrs. Sandford, that Mr. Sandford is no happy. Believe me, ma'am, but I think he's pining for the old ways of the city.' She no doubt noticed those naughty wrinkles; but they will all go off, dear, when we once get settled and going on regular again."

"But you have enjoyed this place so much, dear Carrie."

"So I have; but that's nothing. What do you think Dr. Ransom said to me this morning? You had been telling him, I suppose, that we should very likely sell out and return to the city; so he says: 'Mrs. Sandford, how delightful it is to feel that we are in the hands of a kind Father, whose protecting care follows us wherever his providence leads?'"

"Yes, dear Carrie; and even when we take steps in advance of his guidance, his love and care are not withheld. I feel that they have been very manifest in delivering me from dangers which my imprudence had exposed me to."

"I was going to tell you more that he said. 'You must not regret that you came here. It may seem to you now an unwise step; but I can already see that great good has come out of it. That dear youth, Donald Roland, assures me that you and your husband have done much to change his false views of religion and the government of God—in fact, that the first happy impression he received of true religion was in your house, and when kneeling with you around your family altar.' O dear husband! think of that."

"And that was your doing, dear Carrie."

"And your earnest prayer that night."

"But poor Donald! what is our trouble to his? They say a letter has been received from his cousin, and that he will be on in a few days."

"Was the letter to Donald?"

"No. Dr. Ransom says the lawyer who wrote to him about the will has received it. Would it not be very wrong, dear husband, for that man to take this property under such circumstances? He must know that there is some mistake."

"People don't stand much about right or wrong when a large property is involved in the question. But it does not look very favourable for Donald that his cousin

should have made no inquiry of him, nor noticed him in the matter."

"And do you think, dear husband, that there is anything in that other story that is around?"

"There must be some ground for it, or the party that has started it would not have employed such counsel as Squire Chauncey. He is not a man to take up such a case without all is square and clear. But why is Eva going just now to New York? She does not expect Herbert for a month yet, does she?"

"She cannot tell when to expect him. She received a letter from Mr. Tremain this morning, telling her he had sailed from Rio for England, and would come home from there. Eva says she wishes to see Mr. Tremain on business. She will only be gone a day or two. One thing will be certain, dear husband—Eva will be with us; and the girls say they would like to live with us, too, if we will let them. Mary says she would not wish to stay here if Donald is driven from his place. He will go to the city, and she wishes to be near him. How I do love that dear girl! her heart is so warm and true."

"Just like somebody else."

"There now—take that!"

Surely if kisses will remove wrinkles from the brow and sorrow from the heart, these must prevail; for never were man's lips blessed with tokens more sincere of true heart-love.

"But, Carrie, I fear you do not realize how sad you will feel to have strangers looking through your house and walking over your garden, when they come as purchasers; and more especially when you shall be told that the bargain is closed and all your pleasant fancies connected with this place to be dissipated for ever."

"Well, perhaps I shall; but not on my own account; it will be solely for your sake. You think—I know you do—a thousandfold more of my pleasure and comfort than of your own. I know we shall both feel somewhat sad; but we need not feel unhappy. It seems to be the path of duty; and you know, although that path may not be so agreeable to our fancy, it has one crowning comfort—it is the path of peace. Perhaps we may yet, in God's good time, find a home—at least we will try to make our abode, wherever it is, a place of piety and contentment. The thought, to be sure, of having such a place as this to call our own, and where our children might grow up, and when they leave us, carry with them sweet memories of happy days—a centre for their hearts—

it would be pleasant if thus it could have been. But God is good."

"And you think, dear Carrie, if by to-morrow some persons should come to view the place as purchasers, you could bid them welcome?"

"Yes, to-day; this very day, if they wish to see it."

"Perhaps to-morrow you may be troubled with such a call."

"What sort of people are they?"

"Why, dear?"

"Oh! well, I don't know; but one would like to think of some agreeable, pleasant people as living here."

"When once out of our hands we can have no control, of course; and if it must be sold, we cannot well choose our purchasers."

"No, we cannot, that is true; but you know—how should we feel to have it turned into a tavern?"

Mr. Sandford did not reply. A shade of sadness settled on his face. His wife at once noticed the cloud.

"Is it so, dear husband? Do they want it for that purpose?"

"Well, Carrie, one of them who has applied to me for my terms keeps a tavern, and my impression is, he wishes it for some such purpose."

"Well:" Mrs. Sandford could not say more. It was an ingredient in the cup of trial she had not thought of; and perhaps it was well for her husband that he was just then called away. Her heart was full, and as soon as the door closed behind him the tears burst forth, she could restrain them no longer.

CHAPTER XVII.

JIM PEABODY had taken the advice of Donald, and gone home to his mother. He complained of being unwell, and spent most of his time lying on the sofa or in his own room. He was not disposed to say much; in fact, Jim had nothing to say about the past that he knew would be for his own credit. He had never been very communicative with his sister and his mother, and he had in days past had too many squabbles to allow of the usual freedom between a mother and a son. He knew that something was going on more than common, from the fact that Mr. Tigh had been there on two or three occasions, and his mother and he had been closeted together. As she had not yet made a confidant of him, he resolved, if possible, to find out what private business Tigh could have that should call him there thus often. He had no good opinion of that man, and feared that perhaps his mother might be entering into some arrangements that would place her in his power; and he knew it was a common saying, that whoever had any dealings with Salmon Tigh was sure to be ruined.

On occasion of the interview which has already been recorded, it will be remembered that Tigh was startled by what he thought was a noise in the adjoining room, a place where rubbish of different kinds was deposited, and from which a small window opened into the room where Mr. Tigh and his companion were in conclave. The window was designed merely to give light to the place, which had no other opening but the door. Next to this apartment, on the other side, was the one which Peabody occupied for a bed-room.

Jim had been left by his mother lying in their sitting-room, as she told Tigh, and Cornelia was not at home. No sooner had his mother taken her visitor into privacy, than Jim made

his way as noiselessly as possible, and placed himself under this window, which, being elevated near the ceiling, allowed him to be secure from observation. He could not hear all that was said, or, at least, could not understand particulars, as he had no previous clue to what was the subject of conversation; but he learned one thing—that a paper with a large seal on it was an article of deep interest to them both; and he had a great curiosity to get a peep at the article. He was successful in doing so. But in getting down from his perch, he made a misstep, and had like to have discovered his whereabouts. Luckily for him, and perhaps for others, his mother had no suspicion of any possible espial, and attributed the noise to rats.

Jim was still lying in the room after the departure of Mr. Tigh, and just where she had left him, and had apparently been asleep. As she entered, he asked:

"Who was that drove off?"

"I suppose it was Mr. Tigh—Cousin Salmon."

"Cousin! I'd as lief cousin the devil."

"Why should you talk so, Jim? He is a good friend of ours."

"Not of me. I don't want any such friends as old Sal Tigh. He is an old rip; and mind me, mother, if you have much to do with him, he will lead you into some scrape or other. You know father never liked him."

"Your father never liked him because he was an industrious, money-making man. He never liked any one that thrived and went ahead. If he had been a little smarter himself, he wouldn't have left his wife and children depending on that young upstart."

"Whom do you mean?"

"You know whom I mean well enough. I don't want to speak his name. Who was it ruined your brother and yourself, and turned me and Cornelia out of our home? But his time is short now."

"But he has given you a pretty good home here, I think."

"Home! You call this a home?"

"Yes, a good, snug home, I call it."

"I thought you hated him. Have you not all but threatened his life? A pity you had not finished him when you had a chance."

"And been hung for it!"

"No danger of that. It was only in self-defence."

"Perhaps it was. I don't want to have any one's blood on my hands. I've played the fool bad enough without that. But you haven't told me yet what Tigh wanted."

"It is hardly worth while to do that. I see you have turned all round, and are so dreadfully afraid of some one, you dare not say your soul's your own."

"Afraid! Afraid of whom? I should like to see the man I'm afraid of!"

"What's the reason, then, you are so mealy-mouthed? You used to swear every time his name was mentioned."

"I could swear now if it would do any good; but I have knocked off from swearing."

"I thought something was the matter with you since you've come home. I suppose the next thing I shall hear is that you are going to join the church—like that other hypocrite!"

"Whom do you mean?"

"Why, your precious cousin! No, he an't your cousin, that's one good thing."

"Do you mean Tigh? You called him cousin just now; is Sal going to join the church?"

"I mean Donald Roland, as he has been called. They say he has become very religious, and is going to join the church. Well, his religion, if he has got any, will be all he will have if right is right. He'll be as poor as a church-mouse!"

Jim was silent. He seemed to have ended what he had to say. But Mrs. Peabody had great need of his services, and she must enlist them by some means.

"You know, I suppose, that your Uncle Roland's will has been found?"

"Me! How should I know anything about it? You know I have been away. I thought he never left a will. Haven't you many times told me what a pity it was he hadn't made a will; for he wouldn't have left you dependent if he had?"

"But he has made one, for all that, and it is in my hands. It was made before Donald was born."

"Whom did he leave his property to?"

"Why, of course, it was left to your aunt during her life; but two thousand a year was left to me during my life. The real estate, though, was to go to one of your cousins in Virginia — the one that is called after your uncle."

"What did he do that for?"

"I suppose to keep up the name."

"I don't see how you are going to be benefited by it."

"I shall get two thousand a year besides all that is due me since your uncle's death."

"And lose your house and what Donald has secured to you."

"How so?"

"Why, if he did not own this property, how could he deed it to you? And how could he secure your income if the estate slips out of his hands?"

Mrs. Peabody, with all her shrewdness, had overlooked this feature of the case; and Tigh, with all his cunning, had overlooked the fact that if Donald's claim was good for nothing, the mortgage he had received as security for his advance of money was void. She was silent awhile, and then a new idea came to her relief.

"You know, I suppose, there is a story about that Donald is not your cousin."

"I heard that a good many years ago."

"Yes, but it can be proved."

"Who can prove it?"

"There are two good witnesses that can testify that it was a fact; and they say the old Doctor who is dead winked at it. The child your aunt had was a poor, sickly-looking thing, and the other a fine, healthy boy; and these two women did it out of fun at first, but as it was done unbeknown to your aunt, they didn't dare to say a word about it."

"But surely my Aunt Roland could see what was going on."

"No, she couldn't; there were curtains all round the bed; both children were born within half an hour of each other; and when your aunt heard that Lucia's babe was born she asked the nurse to bring it to her, she wanted to see it. So she brought it in, and after looking a moment at it the woman took it by the fire, where the other woman had your aunt's baby on her lap, and they thought it would be a nice trick to make the change, and see if it would be found out; but your aunt being very smart, and taking so much notice of the baby the next morning, and finding a mark on its arm, they saw it would never do to try and right the thing, so they let it go. The young woman was quite feeble, and because she, in a day or two, would not own the child, the doctor said she was deranged; but she always insisted upon it that it was not her child."

"But she was always thought half-cracked, wasn't she?"

"Well, she wasn't so smart as some."

"I tell you what I think, mother."

"What is it?"

"That it is a hatched-up lie. Are these women now living?"

"One of them we know is, and the other, I guess, will be found."

"Why, if this should be true, I don't see why we will not come in for half the property."

"I know that."

"Why should you want to keep that old will, then?"

"Well, suppose these witnesses should not, both of them, be found, they might not take the testimony of one; and as to what Lucia Rice might say about her belief as to the change that was made, and that her own child was not brought back to her, why, they might say she hasn't her right mind; so this might fall through."

"And then, in that case, the will is to be another string to your bow?"

"Well, between them both, something will come of it, I guess."

"I think there will; but, now tell me honestly, mother, do you believe a word of it yourself?"

"Why shouldn't I?"

"Well, do you? you didn't believe it once."

"You don't know what I believed."

"No, I know that, nor no one else, I guess. But you said, awhile ago, you wanted my help."

"So I do, but if you feel as you do, you won't be like to help much."

"Just try me. Don't you think, if there is a fair chance for grabbing half that property, I would be wide awake about it! What do want me to do?"

"What I want is, to know whether old Sally Martin is alive or not. She is one of the nurses, and she was the one that nursed your aunt. The one that nursed Lucia Rice we know is alive, for I have seen her; but it is of great consequence to find out whether Sally Martin is alive or not—some think she is dead. She moved away from here, but where I do not yet know; but I have heard of a person that used to know her, and I should like you to see that person and inquire of her all you can; perhaps we can get on the track of her. All I want to know is the positive fact whether she is dead or not."

"Well, I'm on hand. I feel rather blue to-day, but to-morrow morning I shall be ready for anything, only give me directions."

"Well now, Jim, if you undertake this, heart and hand, it will be a great help; but you must be mum and not let Cornelia know a word of what is going on."

"I shan't blab, no danger of that. But what ails Cornelia?"

"Oh! she is foolish. She likes Donald, for all that he has treated her so. She never will confess to me that she and Donald were engaged, but I know they were; and he would have married her if it hadn't been for these newcomers, who have turned him clear round."

"Well, it is all best he didn't marry her."

"Why so?"

"Why, if he is not the heir to the property or is only a son of Lucia Rice, it would be no great match, I think."

"That to be sure; but——"

"But what?"

"Oh! well it's no matter."

"I suppose I can tell: if Donald and Cornelia had come together, you would not be so busy hunting up these old nurses."

"No, I should not."

"And I guess the will would not have been found."

"I an't such a fool, Jim, as to want to cut my own nose off."

"So I thought. Well, to-morrow morning let's have the dispatches, and I'll be hunting round, I warrant you."

It was of the utmost consequence to Mrs. Peabody's plan that this Sally Martin should be found, or that the fact of her being alive or dead should be ascertained. If she were not living all would be right; money could supply another, or a substitute, with another name. If alive, there was great fear that she might, in some way, be brought to light. And this knowledge was absolutely necessary; there might be conflicting evidence that would dash the whole plan.

Jim had gained light now, and he meant to be guided by it. He had no faith in the whole concern; he knew his mother had as little faith in it as he had; but he knew when she was once bent upon a certain course, nothing that he could say, or any one else, could turn her purpose. He saw clearly, though, that she was on dangerous ground. She was playing a game that might ruin them all. He had made up his mind to go to sea. A few years away from a place where he had lost caste, and away from bad associates, he believed, would be for his good. He had resolved to live a different life, and had no doubt, if Donald retained his present standing and property, if he should need help to start in life, it would be afforded. At any rate, Donald, he believed, had done him a kindness and at great risk, and he meant to return it if he had a chance.

The next morning, true to his promise, Jim went on his errand. He had been directed by his mother to a person living some miles off, up in the highlands, and made the necessary inquiries; and it was while doing this that Mr. Norseworthy passed by and recognized him. What account he gave to his mother we know not, but that evening Jim was not at home; he had an interview with Donald, and the next morning a trusty messenger was dispatched from Roland Place across the river and far over among the western hills, while Donald himself lost no time in making a visit to Mrs. Haywood, whom the reader will remember being introduced to in the early part of this history.

Mrs. Haywood was not a person likely to hear all that was going on in Woodburn. She seldom went from home, except to church; and as Dr. Ransom had trained his people against indulging in gossip, especially on the Sabbath, there was little to be learned there of general news; and Mrs. Haywood being of Scotch descent, was herself very tenacious of the sacredness of the day, and would be more likely to converse about some doctrinal point that had been touched in the sermon than any worldly matter. All she had heard of Donald's troubles was, that there was some rumour about a will being found, the other story had not reached her.

The reader has been introduced to Mrs. Haywood in the early part of this history. A cheerful smile enlivened her good-looking face as Donald entered.

"You always seem happy, Aunty."

"Why shouldn't I? Such a beautiful world we have got." (It was indeed a lovely morning. The storm of the past night had cleared the atmosphere, and the earth seemed as though newly made.) "And such a kind Father to watch over and care for us! Hear the birds! are they not singing out their happiness? I was just repeating to myself that beautiful Psalm, 'The heavens declare the glory of God;' and thinking how delightful it was to feel that our sympathies harmonize so truly with the servants of God thousands of years ago. It is the one Spirit working in all ages and producing the same childlike feelings."

"And you have no doubt, Aunty, that you are a true child?"

"Doubt! Do you doubt whether you once loved your mother, or that you love her memory now?"

"No, I do not."

"Neither do I doubt that I love my heavenly Father. Is not his name dear to me? Do I not love his Word? Have

I not confidence in his wisdom and love? and if I have the spirit of a child, has he not given it to me? Doubt! No, Donald, dear, I'm never troubled in that way. And let me ask you, can you really say that you have serious doubts about your being reconciled to God?"

"No, Aunty; no, I cannot really say that I have. Shadows come over me at times, but they are like April clouds—they soon pass off. I do think I love Him—" He could not finish his sentence.

"Oh! you must praise him, Donald, day and night, who has vouchsafed to you so great a mercy. Some people feel mightily afraid to say they love God. Read the Psalms; are they not full of expressions of confidence and love? Read the Epistles; do you find the Apostles expressing doubts as to whether they are heart and soul for Christ? Ah Donald! there is more pride than piety in this fear to say out and out that we love him."

"It may be so, Aunty; but you know I am as yet but a babe in such matters. But I dare not deny that I love."

"And may the flame grow warmer and warmer every day you live!"

"I have come this morning to have a little talk with you about my own affairs. I suppose you have heard the story that has got round about me?"

"About that will being found? I am doubting whether there is any such thing in existence; if so, it must be a forgery. Your father loved you too much, and thought too much of having an own child to inherit his estate, ever to have made a will leaving it to any one else."

Donald, however, satisfied her that such an instrument was in existence, and described the circumstances regarding it. Mrs. Haywood listened with great interest to his narrative; and when he had closed, she fixed her dark, bright eye full upon him.

"Donald, you say your aunt has that instrument, and that she says she found it? I doubt that very much. Your father was not the man to leave such a dangerous thing as that around, not after you were born. Depend upon it, he supposed it was destroyed; and I have no doubt it was done before you were born. Your aunt has been at your house a great deal, and she is a prying, artful woman, always thinking of her own interest; and I tell you now she was a great source of trouble to your mother. In some way that instrument has been committed to her for destruction, and she has managed to smuggle it. Your father had great confidence in her."

"I have just learned, Aunty, that you were present at my birth?"

"Wasn't I! and was it not a happy time? Your father was most beside himself. He ordered old Joe, his steward, to get out the big punch-bowl, and to make it full, and that they must all help themselves. I never saw a man take on as he did."

"I suppose you know that there is a serious attempt to prove that I am not the child of the Roland family?"

"You don't say! that old foolish story up again? Your father stopped that once. He threatened to shoot any one that should dare mention it in his presence. You know he was furious when he was roused."

"Could such a thing have been done at the time, Aunty, as they report?"

"Well, I can't say, but it might possibly; for you see it was a curious circumstance that the hostler's wife was confined at the same time as your mother. Rice was the name."

"Were you there at the time when they say the child of Mrs. Rice was brought into the room at my mother's request?"

"No, I was not. I heard your mother ask to see it. But Mr. Haywood was very sick and very low, and I had promised your mother to be with her during her labour. And when they sent for me, had it been any one else, I would not have gone, for my poor husband hated to have me away from him; but I went, as he said they might probably be short of help. So as soon as I could possibly be spared home, I came. No, I didn't see the children together, nor did I see Louise Rice's child at all."

"It is said that Sally Martin was my mother's nurse. Do you know her?"

"I did know her, and know her well—a real good woman—but she is dead, I believe."

"Do you think she would have been privy to such a wicked act?"

"No, I cannot think she would; and she was a mother, too. Would a mother do such a deed as that? No, never!"

"But I hear that it was done in a frolic, just to see whether the mothers would know the difference; but that my mother was so well, and took so much notice of her child, and had found some mark upon it, that the nurses dared not make any attempt to put matters right again."

"It is true, Donald, that you had a mark. I have seen it many a time. It was on the lower part of your arm."

"And it is here now." And baring his arm, the spot was distinctly visible. Mrs. Haywood looked at it a moment.

"Well, if such a thing was done, it was a cruel act, and God's judgment will meet them for it, and I don't know but it has; for Jane Simmons is a poor, miserable creature, living up in the mountains. I have heard she was the one that attended Louise Rice. But Sally Martin I believe to have been a good woman, and no one but herself will ever make me believe she would have done such a foolish act. Do you know is she living?"

"I do not; but have heard where she removed to, and have sent an express to inquire, and if possible, bring her here."

"It is a great pity, Donald, that your father did not, when the story first came out, examine into the matter a little, and see if there was any truth in it. You could not have been over two years old, and it would have been all one to you, at that age, who was your mother, or whether your parents were high or low; but now it would be dreadful. I can't believe it, and I won't believe it. But God only knows what he designs."

"What I wished to know more particularly was, whether this Mrs. Martin was a reliable person, whose testimony could not be doubted. Of course, should she be living, and should testify under oath that the thing was done, why——"

But Donald failed to get out what he designed to say. What Mrs. Haywood had said about the possibility of such an exchange having been made had affected him more sensibly than anything which had been said to him in reference to this strange story, and his thoughts had been working intensely for some time—it all seemed more possible—it began to seem probable, and his strength was hardly equal to the terrible thought. "His past affections all wasted, his social position a cheat, his surroundings a mere dream, his parentage beneath his respect, his whole life to be passed with a drag upon his heart—a spectre by his side!" He sat apparently broken in spirit; the lustre of his eye had gone; his cheek was pale; his hands drooped from the arms of the chair; ambition and hope seemed to have departed.

The good woman cast a look upon his dejected aspect, and burst into tears.

For some time the stillness of the little room was only broken by an occasional sob of his weeping friend. She loved Donald as she loved no one else; for she had no

kindred, and he had been a real friend. She had known no want during all her widowhood, for he had watched over her with a childlike care. Not so much in supplying the necessaries of life—for these she took pleasure in getting by her own industry—her wheel was never idle—but in providing all the little luxuries which are so grateful in advanced life, and attending to many outdoor interests that a lone woman could not well manage. But above all, he had made her his confidant. She had known the dark thoughts that had so long oppressed him, and had been as wise a counsellor, perhaps, as any he could have intrusted with his secret feelings. And he was very near to her. She knew, also, his peculiar temperament. How keenly sensitive, how high-minded even from boyhood, how averse to notoriety he had always been. Not proud, as many thought, but of an exclusive turn. To her he seemed a noble man; and she knew him as others did not.

Her tears have been called forth, not so much because she really thought this report was true, although she had some fears how it might be, as by the hopeless expression of his countenance; it was a phase it had never assumed before; and its strong contrast with the somewhat stern though bright look, so natural to him, made it more manifest. The scene, however, was suddenly broken in upon by the arrival of a messenger from Roland Place. Donald arose and stepped to the door.

"What is it, Peter?"

"Why, sir, there is a strange sort of a visitor come to the house, who seems to feel as if he was master and more. I believe he's from Virginia or somewheres there. He threatened me with the cowhide because I didn't jump to do his bidding. So Jenny said I had better jump on a horse and ride down to Mrs. Haywood's, and see if Mr. Roland was here, for she felt afraid of him."

"Who can it be, Donald?" said Mrs. Haywood.

"I will tell you in a moment. I will come immediately home, Peter. Hasten back, for Jenny will be frightened."

"He don't frighten me, sir. I told him, when he threatened to strike me, if he raised his whip over me, he'd get it over his own back."

"Treat him civilly, Peter. But I will be home nearly as soon as you are." And then turning to Mrs. Haywood: "I suppose my trouble is now to begin. This person is, no doubt, my cousin, who has come on to take possession of his inheritance. It may be he will, through one or other of the chances which have so strangely turned up, get it away from

me; but I shall maintain what I believe to be my right by every lawful means."

"Remember the promise, dear Donald: 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.'"

"I do remember it, Aunty, and also that 'the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much.'" And as Donald said this, he gave her an expressive look.

"Yes, oh! yes; and if fervent prayer will avail, you will not be left in the hour of your need."

Donald, as he rode toward his home, endeavoured to attain full possession of himself by hushing to rest the fears that had so disturbed him, and nerving himself to the discharge of the duties before him. He had taken good counsel; and, although his means of defence were limited, he meant to resist to the last what he believed to be a great wrong.

As he ascended his stoop, a man came from the hall and stood in the doorway, looking boldly at him, but saying nothing. He was hardly of medium height, rather stocky in build. His face long and sallow. His eyes very dark, as well as his hair, which hung about his ears and down on the collar of his coat. He had the appearance of a dissipated person; and from the peculiar stare in his eye, seemed at the time to be somewhat under the influence of liquor.

As Donald came up to him, he asked in a pleasant tone of voice:

"May I ask whom I have the pleasure of addressing?"

"I suppose you know, don't you? Let's have *your* name first."

"With pleasure, sir. My name is Roland."

"I thought as much. And so is mine. Robert Roland is my name; and I suppose we are cousins; and I suppose you know the reason why I am here?"

"Please walk in," said Donald, at the same time extending his hand, which the gentleman received without much manifestation of cordiality. He at first hesitated, as though he might be compromised in some way by accepting any hospitality. He seemed to feel that he was rightly the host, and the other but a guest. The self-possessed manner of Donald somewhat damped his resolution. He was not so much under the power of stimulants as not to be able to discern that his cousin was not one that could safely be insulted or trifled with. He, therefore, after a moment's pause, turned and followed into the parlour. With the same courteous manner, Donald presented him with a seat, inquired after the

friends at home, and very soon asked whether anything could be procured for his comfort.

"Shall I not order a lunch for you?"

"The wench did bring me up some."

"Oh! I am very glad she was so thoughtful."

"Thoughtful! I guess she'd never have thought much about it, if I hadn't ordered it. Let me ask you, do these niggers belong on the place?"

"My servants have been here for many years."

"What I asked was, whether they belonged to the estate?"

"They belong to themselves. You know that slavery has been abolished here."

"I thought something was the matter, or they wouldn't have been so saucy. I was a good mind to have laid my whip over that fellow in the stable there."

"It was well you did not. I fear you would have got the worst of it."

Donald's patience was pretty near being exhausted, but he was determined not to lose his temper. However, things could not long remain in their present position, so he asked:

"As you seem somewhat ruffled, cousin, may I ask for what I am indebted for this visit?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because I am not accustomed to rudeness, and am therefore desirous of knowing what your business is, that so far as I can further it, it may be accomplished, and our interview ended."

"You know well enough what my business is. I came here as the rightful owner of this place. My lawyer tells me it is mine, and I have nothing to do but take possession; and here I am, and here I mean to stay."

"Your lawyer has given you very wrong advice. You will find that there will be considerable to be done before your right here can be established."

"That has got to be done by you. I am here by virtue of my right as heir to this estate. You must show your title to it against a clear, straight will. He says the will is as straight as a die. It was drawn up by one of the best lawyers, and can't be put aside. He has gone this very minute to have it approved and put upon record. Disprove it if you can."

"Had you come here and behaved as a gentleman, you would have been treated as such. But I tell you, impertinence has never been allowed under this roof; and

while I am master here, will not be endured. Make up your mind, sir, then at once to change your manner, or remove your presence; and you have but an instant for a choice."

"How can you make me remove if I am not so disposed?"

"I presume you would not wish to be expelled by force, and would prefer to leave at my suggestion."

What alternative Mr. Robert Roland might have chosen we cannot tell; for a gig had driven up, and a gentleman whom Donald recognized as the lawyer who had been employed by the party for the will, immediately alighted. The party interested, who also recognized him, started up and abruptly left the room, and they met on the stoop. What passed between them, Donald did not attempt to hear. They soon entered the carriage together, and drove quickly off.

It was probably about half an hour after this that Donald was called from his room, and to his great surprise, as he entered his parlour, saw Mr. Norseworthy standing before one of the fine pictures that, among others, hung round upon the walls.

The gentleman turned as Donald entered.

"Excuse me, Mr. Roland; but I have taken the liberty to indulge myself in admiring these pictures. You have a beautiful place here. I don't think I was ever in this house before. What a grand old house it is! I wonder how long it has been built—and what a view you have! Those trees, I guess, must be old settlers!"

All this was said so rapidly that Donald had no chance to bid him welcome. He took his hand, however, and pointed the gentleman to a seat.

"I am happy to welcome you here, Mr. Norseworthy. Any news to-day, sir?"

"Well, there is no news that I hear from abroad, but I have come to give you a bit of news that may be of some consequence to you. We've got 'em, sir?"

"Got whom, Mr. Norseworthy?"

"The rogue, the scoundrel, the villain! It can be proved against him; and Chauncey says he can be brought up with a round turn and made to sweat dreadfully—I believe it's felony—and he deserves it if ever a man did. He ought to be put to the treadmill—he's kept others there long enough—the sinner that he is."

"But who is it to whom you have reference, Mr. Norseworthy?"

"Tigh, sir—Tigh—Salmon Tigh. The meanest, grinding, stealing, hypocritical old sinner that ever breathed the

breath of life. Yes, sir, I say stealing! He has robbed me, sir, poor man as I am, and he knew it at the time—yes, sir, he has robbed me all of six thousand dollars, all of that, sir!"

It was impossible for Donald to divine for what purpose Mr. Norseworthy was communicating all this to him, without he wished a warrant for his arrest.

"And you wish to have him arrested?"

"Yes, if I could; but that matter is all settled. I squared off with him; I gave him a deed, and he gave me up my notes, so we squared it up; but it was a mean action. Oh! he is a villain; but we have a turn on him now, or at least you have."

"Mr. Norseworthy! I never had any dealings with Mr. Tigh!"

"But he has had dealings with you, or dealings against you!"

"I am quite ignorant, I assure you, sir, of anything Mr. Tigh has done to injure me, or of any cause why he should attempt to. I have never come in his way that I know of."

"Yes, you have; every good man is in his way; every honest man is in his way. Haven't you been trying to help those poor devils up in Notch Hollow? Is it not known that you are more ready to give a dollar to a poor man than to take one from him?"

"I hope you would too, Mr. Norseworthy."

"So I would; but you see, with me, the spirit might be willing, but there isn't always a dollar in the purse to give. But to come to the point. Tigh has run his race in Woodburn, I guess; that is, if you say the word. We can prove it against him, no mistake; he is in a trap. I suppose Squire Chauncey has told you what we've been at?"

"I have had no communications with the Squire of late; he is not my lawyer, sir."

"Well, yes, I know in a certain way he is not, but a better friend you haven't got in this world. Why, Squire Roland, he has kept me trotting from pillar to post, from Dan to Beersheba, hurry-skurry all over, all mum as a mouse, though nobody had any idea, when they saw me and the old mare trotting round, what we were smelling after. But the Squire was determined, and I was determined, it there was deviltry going on, to get to the bottom of it, and we have, sir. All this fuss about your not being the child of old Robert Roland is blown to the—excuse me, sir, but when I get warm I don't stop to pick my words."

"What do you mean, Mr. Norseworthy?" And Donald rose up greatly excited.

"I mean, sir, that the whole thing is a lie—got up, in the first place by a certain person whom I need not name, and, with the help of Tigh and his money, attempted to be established by lying and prying and bribery, and heaven knows what not; but it's all blown up now, sky-high. And what I came here for was to get you to go to Squire Chauncey's office without delay. He wants to have a warrant got out to take Tigh; but about the other party, he says you must do as you think best. It is all exploded just like a paper balloon. The Squire has thrown up the case; he says he has evidence enough to send them all to limbo. Come, sir, will you go?"

Donald had been walking up and down while this harangue was being delivered, his feelings wrought up to their highest pitch. He said nothing, but there went up from his full heart such breathings of thanksgiving and praise as can go forth alone from one who has experienced a like deliverance. The moment Mr. Norseworthy ceased, he stepped up to him and grasped his hand.

"And you, Mr. Norseworthy, have been instrumental in the accomplishment of this great benefit?"

"I have done what I could, and would have worked the old mare's legs off but I would have got into that rat's nest!"

"I do not know, Mr. Norseworthy, that it will be in my power to compensate you, for it may be I am not worth a cent in the world; but——"

"Please stop, sir—stop, Squire—I an't rich, I own, but I an't very poor; but rich or poor, before I would take one cent for trying to get an honest and honourable man out of the power of such hell-hounds, I'd go and sell gingerbread and peanuts in the city of New York! No, sir; it's pleasure and compensation enough to me to see that tear in your eye. Odds, man, I feel soft as a baby myself; but come, let's go and see the Squire, he will wonder what the dickens keeps us."

"I will order my horse at once."

Hunter was soon at the door, and as Donald was about to mount, Squire Chauncey himself drove up. Donald received him cordially.

"Come in, Donald, come in, I have news to tell you."

"What now," said Mr. Norseworthy; "I hope nothing bad!"

"Come in, and we will see."

"Well, my good fellow," said the Squire, "we are too late, too late." He addressed himself to Donald: "But, perhaps it's as well; you might not have wished to have carried the thing to extremes; but your aunt has left the place."

"But Tigh! Tigh!" said Norseworthy.

"I have sent Busby after him."

"Good, good! the old rat! he has ground his last grist, the old sinner!" and Mr. Norseworthy clapped his hands.

"You say my aunt has left the place?"

"Yes; I have just come from there; but here is a letter Cornelia handed to me. She said her brother left it under cover of one for her. It is addressed to you; perhaps it will explain things more fully; but it seems your cousin has come on, and this morning Mr. Jones, the lawyer in his interest, called at Mrs. Peabody's to get the will, in order to its being proved and recorded; but she was not to be found. A letter was left directed to Mr. Jones, in which she says the will was taken from her desk in the night and destroyed. Cornelia says she thinks James must have done it. But open your letter, man."

Donald broke the seal; it was short, only a few words. He looked over it, and then handed it to the Squire.

"You can read it."

The Squire exclaimed, as he handed it back:

"Well done, Jim! No doubt it was designed for the flames years ago, but it has reached its destination at last. But rogue as he is, he has done you and all of us a great favour, Donald. I wish you joy, my good fellow!"

"What is it?" said Norseworthy, who, being a little one side, did not understand the drift of things.

"The will there has been so much talk about has been destroyed, burnt up."

"Who did it?"

"Jim Peabody."

"What! why that is like Satan casting out Satan."

"They say that Jim has taken a new turn lately; he has gone off to ship from New York."

"Well, I won't give up any one after this—if Jim Peabody takes a right turn, I don't know who may not."

While this conversation was going on between the Squire and Mr. Norseworthy, Donald, absorbed in thought, walked back and forth. He was scarcely thinking of the end which had been accomplished—his great deliverance. His mind was running back over a chain of events, all linked together by a mysterious Providence, and connecting the present and the past—all connected with his own agency, but directed by a wise and merciful hand. God was over all and about all. A present God, a Father indeed, watching over the smaller as well as the larger interests of his children! Oh! should he ever again feel that he was alone in a fatherless world!

"Your cousin, Cornelia," said Squire Chauncey, "is left in a very unpleasant condition. So far as I can learn, she has been in no way implicated in this matter; and, in fact, until she received the letter which Jim left for her, knew nothing of it."

"I must go and see her, and, if she is willing, shall take her to my own home. But have you any idea, Squire Chauncey, where my aunt has gone?"

Mr. Norseworthy interposed before the Squire had time to reply.

"Don't, I beg of you, trouble yourself about *her;* she is safe enough, I'll warrant you that. I shouldn't wonder if she and Tigh had gone off together; they would make a pretty couple, they'd be well matched, though I shouldn't like to say that the match was made in heaven. Don't, for the sake of peace and quietness, ever try to get her back in this town again."

"I agree with Mr. Norseworthy," said the Squire. "Let well enough alone. I rather think, too, that she has fled to Tigh, and that the latter, when he hears the news she will have to tell him, will not remain long in Hopewell. Busby, I rather think, will have a ride for nothing."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE beautiful month of October has again come round, and quite a company has assembled on the large piazza at Roland Place. It is at the close of a lovely day; the sun is just about to set beneath an amber sky, and his golden beams are streaming through the shrubby summits of the opposite mountains. The river lies before and beneath, smooth as a mirror, dotted with here and there a few sloops at anchor, waiting for the turn of the tide, or a night breeze to help them against it. It is a parting scene, but good cheer prevails. They have but just risen from the supper-table, and have come out to enjoy the balmy air and the delightful scenery. Mr. and Mrs. Sandford and their little family, with Eva Herbert, are on their way to the city. Mr. Sandford has made arrangements for a renewal of business relations with his old firm; he has taken a house for the winter; and Eva, who is to live with them, is expecting in a week the arrival of her dear Willie, and wishes to be there in time to greet him after their long separation. Mary and Julia Herbert are there, and Joe Bradford, who has brought the little party in his big wagon, is also there. Joe looks finely; his fresh and manly countenance fairly shines with glee; no mark of care has marred it yet. Joe has had some days of darkness, but they are past, and his heart is light and his strength unabated. How he springs over that fence with just one hand upon the upper slat! But who is it that he has gone to assist—that young lady whose chestnut ringlets play so prettily around her fair cheeks as she is stooping at a bush of flowers? She is gathering a bouquet of autumn beauties to go with dear friends as loving mementos. Ah! Joe has reached her.

"Will you allow me, Miss Julia, to hold your flowers while you gather them?"

"Certainly, Mr. Bradford; here they are." And quite a

lapful is poured into his hands. "O dear! your hands are too small to hold them; they are half on the ground now!"

"That is because you alarmed me so."

"Alarmed you! how, may I ask, Mr. Bradford?"

"There! I shall let them all drop if you keep on. I am not used to being *Mistered*."

"Oh! well, neither am I used to be *Missed*—only occasionally. You must stop it, Mr. Joseph, or I shall begin to think I am a grown-up lady, and must be careful of the proprieties—O Joseph Bradford! what are you doing?"

"I am trying to fix these flowers end to end; is not that the way to make a—what do you call it, I don't know your French name—a nosegay?"

"You are right; I like that name better than the other; but whoever saw one fixed in that way; did *you* ever?"

"Well, is it not a good way? You can take hold of them in the middle and smell first one end and then the other.

The pretty girl looked at him a moment, and then broke into a hearty laugh, its clear notes ringing like music through the still air.

"Oh! see Joseph, see! there is Dr. Ransom's carriage, and Mrs. Ransom is with him! O dear! how good that will be!"

"And I must go and see to the Doctor's horse."

"I guess I have flowers enough—here, let me take them in my apron again. O dear! I believe men were never made to handle flowers!"

"They are awkward creatures, I confess—at least I am."

The young girl looked up at him as if about to reply; a smile played around her rosy lips; she said nothing, but holding her apron up with one hand, placed the other within the arm that was held out for it; there was no awkwardness in that movement, nor in that firm tread or manly gait. As the two kept step along the broad garden-walk, it was a pretty sight, and some smiling faces were turned that way from the piazza, and some whispers passed, but neither Joe nor Julia, of course, could hear.

But Joe had to leave his pretty charge before he reached the garden-gate, and springing over the fence as before, was beside the Doctor's carriage just in time to assist the lady to alight.

"It was such a beautiful evening," the Doctor said, as he came up on the piazza, "we thought we must come and enjoy, as long as possible, the company of these dear friends."

"I believe," said Mrs. Ransom, "this dear woman,"

taking Mrs. Sandford in her embrace, "has really captivated my good husband, as well as some other of our gentlemen."

"I acknowledge the charge. She has won our hearts; and this, I am very sure, would be almost a mourning circle, if we did not believe that the hold she has taken of our affections is one that cannot well be loosed by separation. We shall expect to claim her as ours, although her home be not with us."

"My home is *here*," replied Mrs. Sandford, as she clasped her husband's arm, "*here*. Wherever he is, *there* is home; but Woodburn will ever be in my mind as a bright vision, in which, for a little space, I seemed to realize what Paradise once was."

Donald, with Mary Herbert leaning on his arm, just then stepped up to Eva, and speaking almost in a whisper:

"Why not now? you heard what Mrs. Sandford has just said?"

"Yes, now—the very time."

Mary then withdrew her arm, and Eva, taking her place, the two advanced at once into the little group, and Donald, drawing from his bosom a paper, handed it to Mrs. Sandford.

"My dear madam, this friend of yours and myself, anxious to manifest in some way our admiration of your character and our personal affection, present you with this deed, which secures to you and yours the home you have just left. We do not intend thereby to intimate that we wish your present plans to be disturbed; but we wish you to feel that the spot which we believe you love is still under your control, and that the flowers and the trees will be still growing and blooming for you, whenever you see fit to come here and enjoy them."

"My dear husband," said Mrs. Sandford, looking up to him, "what does it mean?"

"It means, dear Carrie, that this noble, generous youth, and our dear Eva, have done just what I could have wished to do—and that is, have gratified you by allowing you to feel that the place you prize so highly is yours beyond the reach of peradventure."

"Dear, dear Eva!" and Mrs. Sandford threw her arms around her, kissing her again and again. Eva in a moment whispered, "Donald!"

Mr. Sandford had already taken Donald's hand; he could hardly do more than press it most cordially. Mrs. Sandford, as soon as Eva spoke, turned toward him.

"And you, dear brother; little did I think when I asked you to regard me as a sister that we should ever be brought

to feel the tenderness of that relationship as I do now. You cannot think how happy you have made me! But I cannot understand it all. I thought Mr. Tremaine had bought it?"

"Yes; but you must let Eva explain the whole process; she has been the managing partner in this business."

"And that I can do at some other time; but all I need explain at present is, that as William and I expect to make our home with you, we shall want to have a chance—or I shall, at least—to spend some portion of the year at Woodburn; and as no place I know would be so agreeable to you as the home you love so much here, Donald and I have desired you to enjoy the satisfaction of knowing that there is a place you and yours can look to and think of as home."

Dr. Ransom had not been an indifferent spectator of this scene. His heart was burning within him as he heard the words and saw the deep emotion manifested by each of the parties concerned. He stepped up and took the hand of Mrs. Sandford as soon as Eva ceased speaking.

"Your dear husband has told me of the noble manner in which you have acted during all the trying scenes of the few past months. No wonder, then, that the tear of joy is standing on his cheek at this accomplishment of what we all know would have been his heart's wish. You have borne your trials like a true woman; the heart of your husband can safely trust in you. I cannot think it necessary to thank these dear youth who have done this deed, because I know that they are now enjoying the richest luxury of a noble heart—the pleasure of making others happy."

Dear reader, we must again part. We might, indeed, go together to the wedding scene which is to take place between Donald and his dear Mary at the home of Joseph Bradford, as soon as her brother shall have arrived; but we can anticipate the joy of pure hearts when binding themselves by the solemn vows of faithful love; and we can sympathize with that noble youth, once almost an outcast, when he sees one of the dear ones over whom his heart has brooded clasping the arm of one so pure, so noble, so true, as her own for ever.

The steamboat bell is ringing; and while the company are separating, we too, dear reader, will say adieu.

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